HM

The Hard Music Magazine

Mattie Montgomery
I, The Breather
Kutless
Blake Martin
Nine Lashes
For King & Country
Pioneer
The Kings Kids

DAVID CROWDER* BAND

February 2012 • *Issue Number 153*
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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

AND OUR READERS SAID...

We are carrying on our 27-year tradition of asking you to vote for your favorite artists, albums, etc, and (like always) we plan on publishing the results in the issue that comes out in March. Only, now that we are monthly, we could have done this at the end of last year and printed the results in the January issue like every other magazine. That is true. And it is true that I failed miserably on that this year, but with the big transition from print & digital to exclusively digital and the bonus December/Christmas issue it just fell through the cracks. I'm sorry. Now, get on over to this online survey and fill in your favorites. Remember to vote with 2011 in mind. If it came out after January first, forget about it. If it came out in late December of 2010, we'll cut you some slack. We're not completely uncaring and crazy around here! As the 77s said, "Go with God, but go:

SURVEYMONKEY.COM/S/HARDMUSICPOLL

It is sad to say goodbye to the David Crowder* Band. While they are not full-on metal, neither are Startflyer 59, Thrice, Band and a few other bands who we've had on our cover (not to mention the Third Day cover ... mind you, I said *not* to mention that!), but they are awfully chicken-flipping creative and cool. That's enough said on that subject.

A special thanks and "metal of honor" award goes to Dan MacIntosh. He's been a longtime writer for HM Magazine and he went above and beyond the call of duty with this cover story. Turns out the farewell tour, Christmas holiday, final DC*B show at the Passion Conference and then a radio publicity tour kept our gottee-wearing frontman insanely busy and unavailable for an interview until (finally) February 2nd, kinda sorta after our deadline for this issue. Less than half a day after the interview was over Dan turned in his story. That's called awesome and hyper-sonic speed work!

Two more things: One, you'll notice that we threw in some retro album reviews from the past, giving you a glimpse back at what we thought *then* about some albums and bands that turned out to be great. Two, I've worked it out and we have a place that'll print-on-demand each and every digital issue of HM. Get on over to lulu.com and search "HM Magazine" and you'll see all our options ($5.99 for an expanded 84-page b&w version; $15.99 for a 52-page all-color version). For more info, see my blog (hmmag.com/category/blog)

SPINNING AT HM NOW

STRYPER	*Loud & Clear*	An audio book of the same title. Research...
SONS	*Keep Quiet*	Oh my! So good, I almost gave it a "5" rating.
PAPER ROUTE	*Absence*	Prepping my ears for *The Peace of Wild Things*.
EISLEY	*Deep Space* EP	These gals could argue in the car & it'd be great.
OSKORD	*Weapon of Hope*	Crazy fun folk metal.Flutes and growls ... oh yeah!
FLYING COLORS	*S/T*	Crazy good prog rock that concentrates on songs!
MAYLENE & THE...	*IV*	This album is just absolutely killer! Ozzy in a swamp.

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Letters to the Edit

MY IPAD HAS ESSENTIAL TATTOOS?

I think you will agree... Check out these two pics of my iPad. I think you will recognize some of the stickers. I think this will definitely create some buzz at work. I have already told one guy at work about HM. Essential tattoos, yes?
–Nathan Downing, via email

Ed – If you're over 18 and workin' a job, I say, "Yes!"

BODY PIERCING SAVED MY LIFE

I recently finished the book *Body Piercing Saved My Life* and, as you know, you were a key part of the narrative. I know I'm several years late on this, but I wanted to email you to say thanks for being real with the author. You obviously left quite an impression (for the good) on him and managed to show him some normalcy in Christianity without compromising your values. In fact, I was quite impressed with pretty much all of the people he encountered on his book-writing journey, it was inspiring. I grew up in the CCM world and left it feeling very jaded, but this book, and particularly your role in it, helped me shed that feeling a bit. Anyway, I just felt compelled to reach out and say thanks. You're doing a good thing out there and it's not unnoticed. All the Best.
–Jay Harren, via email

Ed – That is really encouraging to hear. Thanks so much. It was a pleasure hanging out with Andrew B. Love the guy and was excited to see how the book turned out. With your background, I bet you'll dig our new column, Reunion Tour: Tales from the Conservative Underground.

FIRST GIVE ME A REFUND

I've just got so much junk on my computer man. And I like having the physical thing in my hand. I just don't have the money right now. But I LOVE your magazine, man. Like, I love how there's actually a MESSAGE with the music and the passion is there, man. I can feel your passion through it, dude. Straight up. Not many people do stuff for the love and doing something, man. It's all about money and self-worth. By the way, how much does it cost to run ads? Because I'd love to get my band in there and help you out, too. I wanna be in a magazine that means something.
–Andrew Finchum, Meridian, ID

RESPONDING TO AN OLD SUB AD

Deal "C" will do me fine as long as the Lord doesn't return before the three's up! Great stewardship going digital. You'll wind up with more circulation. You bet. Best,
–Robert "Bob" Wallin, *via email*

Ed – We received your order, which was an old "sub + shirt for $30" offer. I'm sending you a separate email to share the news about HM going out of print this past fall and how we're now digital/online only. That leaves this order. Would you prefer:
A) nothing. Refund this $30
B) 6 most recent printed issues ($24 value) + shirt
C) 3-year digital issue sub (36 issues) + shirt.

DIGI SUB CONFUSION

Hi. I made a payment of $6.00 for the 12-month subscription of your magazine. The date was the 11th of December, 2011. Am I to get a coupon or code or something so I can access the magazines? All it would allow me to do was read the first 5 pages, then it asked for a coupon or something. I have never received any coupons, codes or anything since then. Can you help? Regards.
–Colin Saddington, via email

Ed – Sorry for the confusion. When you go to the hmmag.com/subscribetohm link, it takes you to a webpage that has the cover of our Oct/Nov/Dec 2011 Issue #150 on it, which is confusing, since that issue is old, and has a heading for Login and Password and Coupon/Token. Below those headings, however is another one that says: "Subscription Options - Digital Only - HM Magazine - All issues, Online delivery" and a button that says $6.00. That price is about to go up to $12 per year, by the way (later this month). This lower heading is the only part of this page you need to concern yourself with. Clicking on the price button will take you to a form where you get to create/enter your Username and Password. The nice thing is you'll also see the current issue's cover there, which is a nice hint that you're at the right place. Enter that info and hit "Continue" and you'll be at a Paypal form to pay for and check out of the process. Once the payment goes through, you will see a link that returns you to "HM Magazine, LLC." Clicking there will take you to the login page for the digital issue. Here is where you'll enter the Username and Password you created. If you miss this link, just get to the "New Issue" link at the top of hmmag.com and it'll show you how to get to the digital issue, which first sends you the login form. Once you login once, subsequent visits will go straight to the digital issue's pages. Enjoy. As always, if you have any troubles, give me an email at service@hmmag.com

THE VOICE

I've spent many hours delving into this. I downloaded all the samples and bought the NT. Thanks for putting the word out (via your email blast).
–Matt Bowler, via email

Ed – Glad to hear it.

HM

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SCRIPTURE "I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me."

"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Proverbs 8:17, Jeremiah 29:12, 13)

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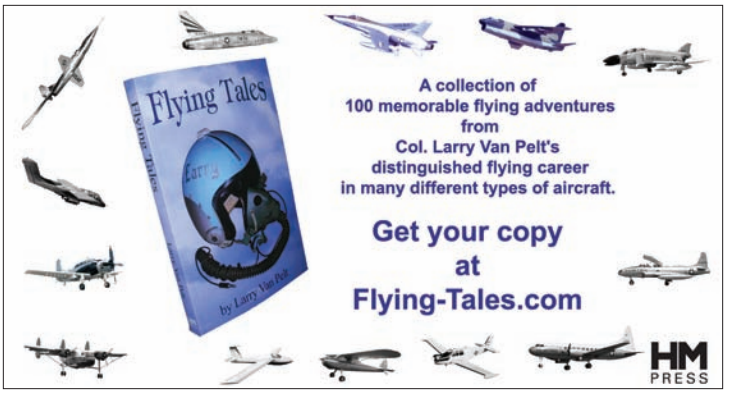

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HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

CIRCLESLIDE ON 700 CLUB
OPENING SEGMENT ON SHOW

Gabe Martinez, founder and lead singer of the critically-acclaimed Christian pop/rock band Circleslide, is featured in the opening story on the February 2nd episode of the Christian Broadcasting Network's (CBN) 700 Club Interactive, which airs daily on the ABC Family Channel. In a segment titled "The Prodigal Son," Martinez and his father, Ramon Martinez, share how Gabe ran away from home on Christmas Eve when he was 17. In the months that followed, Gabe, who had left to join a band, became involved in a lifestyle that included drinking and sleeping in friends' cars. His family, his father said, never stopped praying for their son. The Martinez family's story had a happy ending. After several months, Gabe quit the band and returned home, where he rediscovered his faith.

SAINT HOOLIGAN SIGNS TO TPR
THUMPER PUNK WELCOMES BAND

Saint Hooligan takes old school punk rock back to its origins melding skulls, mohawks, graffiti, tattoos and attitude into their own unique blend of music. Aggressively boot-stomping over mainstream musical boredom, Saint Hooligan delivers deep lyrics with purpose over burning guitars and thunderous beats. Featuring front man Marc Heath on vocals and bass, Travis May on guitar and Andrew Toland on drums, Saint Hooligan defiantly awaits with the melodic sound of working class streets. Hooligans for life; Saints for eternity! Find out more about Saint Hooligan at: facebook.com/SaintHooliganMusic & reverbnation.com/sainthooligan

For Today in the studio, touring soon

Van's Warped Tour have announced Christian metalcore band For Today as one of the latest acts confirmed for this year's touring festival. The Razor & Tie band will perform the entire nationwide run, from June 16th through August 20th. For Today will also kick off their 2012 nationwide headlining *Fight The Silence Tour* presented by HK Army and Substream Magazine. The tour kicks off March 9th in Nashville, TN and runs through the end of April and will make stops throughout the country including the Never Say Never Fest, SXSW and New England Metal & Hardcore Festival before concluding on April 22nd. The tour features additional support from A Skylit Drive, Stick To Your Guns, MyChildren MyBride and Make Me Famous. For Today is currently in the studio with producer Will Putney to work on their fourth full-length album to be released via Razor & Tie in Spring 2012. Putney (Lamb Of God, Suicide Silence) previously worked on For Today's 2010 release *Breaker*. Having played over 1000 shows in five continents, For Today has sold over 65,000 albums in North America.

News bullets

After releases on Strike First Records and Sancrosant Records, **The Burial** are now signed to Facedown Records for the release of their new album *Lights and Perfections*.

August Burns Red are scheduled to play this year's Hellfest.

Mosaic Artistry Group's most recent signing **The Beautiful Refrain**, is preparing to release their debut EP, *Redemption:Daylight* on March 17.

Newsboys won mtvU's contest for "Miracles," their latest video for *God's Not Dead (Like A Lion)*.

After nearly a decade with Christian rock band **Hawk Nelson**, frontman and founding member **Jason Dunn** will depart the group on May 15th. Dunn plans to release his first solo project under the name **Lights Go Down** later this year.

P.O.D. joins **12 Stones** and **Chevelle** on Rock on the Range Festival.

Ethos Records has just signed **Under Cities**. Hailing from Reno, NV, Under Cities brings a fresh face and new sound to the posi hardcore scene. Their debut album is slated for release in early spring and the band will be on tour to support the record in spring and summer 2012.

Ethos also signed **Long Live The King**, who are from Redding, CA. This spring should see the band's new album and several live dates.

Comeback Kid just released a video for its song, "Do Yourself A Favor."

12 Stones debuted a lyric video at hmmag.com the first week of February.

Impending Doom will release its fourth album, *Baptized in Flith*, on March 13th. The cover art, explained by bassist **David Sittig**: "*Baptized in Filth* represents the mindless indulgance and self worship in the vile world we live in. This album is meant to scare the hell out of you!" The album was produced by Andreas Magnusson (The Black Dahlia Murder) and Machine.

Letter to the Exiles

I FIRST HEARD LONG ISLAND-BASED LETTER TO THE EXILES ON MYSPACE, WHILE HUNTING FOR BANDS FOR ONE OF MY SHOWS. THEY AGREED TO MAKE THE DRIVE DOWN TO PA FOR THE SHOW. WHEN LTTE WENT ON THEY WERE SIMPLY A BAND NOBODY REALLY KNEW. BUT I NOTICED THAT PEOPLE STARTED REALLY LISTENING TO THE BAND, RATHER THAN TALK THROUGH THE PERFORMANCE. AT THE END THE AUDIENCE GAVE A BIG ROUND OF APPLAUSE, NOT BECAUSE THE BAND WAS MADE UP OF THEIR FRIENDS, BUT BECAUSE THE BAND STOOD OUT WITH A UNIQUE NY STYLE, THAT MADE SERIOUS HARD MUSIC PEOPLE TAKE NOTICE. TODAY LTTE IS WITH STRIKE FIRST RECORDS AND TOURING. I ASKED BASSIST JAMES APPLETON A SERIES OF QUESTIONS INTENDED TO PROBE DEEPER INTO THE HEART OF THE BAND.

Tell me how you guys got involved in music. What led you into hardcore style? Why did you start LTTE?

Each member has been playing music for the majority of their lives, from on their own, to other bands, to church worship teams, etc. Having grown up in the punk/hardcore/metal scenes and having such a passion for this style of music it only made sense to start a heavy band. Hardcore/Metal is all of our style of choice, while we all listen to everything from Jazz to Bruce Springsteen to Norma Jean, we just have a passion for music and everything involved with it. We all know the feeling we got from the bands who influenced us to start playing music, and we hope we may be able to instill that same feeling we had on kids and people today. We started LTTE for that reason along with having a passion for Christ and wanting people to know we are all people, we make mistakes just like anyone else, but we have a relationship with the Savior Jesus Christ who can save us from ourselves. We feel a lot of time in today's society Christ's love is often over looked and Christians try portraying themselves as perfect people, when in reality there is one person in history who was perfect, Jesus Christ. We want to make a connection with those searching who feel like they "aren't good enough" for Church or have been turned off by judgmental Christians. We want to connect with them, love them, and show them the love Jesus has for them.

Were you primarily influenced by the NY hardcore scene?

Growing up in the hardcore scene we experienced something so many people, especially younger kids in today's scene, haven't experienced, and that's being the true passion for the music and the scene. All of us are 23-25 years old, so we're a little older than most in today's scene and we have seen such a change in the scene. Years ago the hardcore scene was truly an underground culture, not many people were a part of it or interested in it, but those who were lived and died by it. Instant connections would be formed with people you saw walking down the street who looked like they liked hardcore, because there simply was not a big community, so it was great to meet people who share the same passion for hardcore. Back in the day, hardcore was about coming together as a community of people with one common goal, to have fun hearing and playing heavy music. People of all backgrounds and beliefs could play the music they loved and be respected by all, because that was how the scene was. Today the scene has become much more popular and commercialized and the same passion and respect is not there anymore. Kids only seem to support the giant bands now and have no interest in their own local scene (it didn't used to be that way, people had pride in their local bands and local scene). Less and less people come to shows unless it's the biggest band with the most breakdowns, most don't stay the whole time or watch every band, and for someone, such as us in LTTE who have been around for over 10 years in the hardcore scene, it's sad to see.

The NY Hardcore scene of old was everything the scene should be, the passion and the love for the bands and for having fun together, the community aspect was awesome. That is what made us love the hardcore scene and want to play this music. While there are so many great bands and styles of music out there, there is just nothing that can compare to the energy and passion that one can find at a hardcore show. For people who don't listen to the music or haven't been to any hardcore shows they can't understand it until they experience it, and that's why we love hardcore. Hardcore bands almost always represent something and have a message they want to convey and that is something that separates the scene and makes it so great, the passion for the music and what those lyrics are saying.

(see more at hmmag.com)

BY JIM LAYTON

Youngside Records has added **Frühstück** to its artist roster. The Polish band is releasing its third full-length album, *Quiet*.

Abandon releases its *Control* Expanded Edition today featuring the full *Control* album that released last spring from Forefront Records amidst widespread acclaim, as well as four songs newly remixed by members of celebrated bands MUTEMATH, David Crowder*Band, Family Force 5 and Paper Route.

As I Lay Dying will spend their summer as part of the fifth annual *Rockstar Energy Drink Mayhem Festival*, the world's largest touring heavy music festival.

John Elefante is running a Kickstarter campaign for his next solo album.

Sent By Ravens have posted the title track to their second album, *Mean What You Say*, which releases February 28th.

Centricity Music recently announced that the label has signed the Nashville-based rock group, **Remedy Drive**.

Hollister, CA-based metal/hardcore crossover **Leaders** have joined the Facedown family. Their debut album, *Now We Are Free*, is comprised of 10 tracks engineered by Zack Ohren at Castle Ultimate Studios (As Blood Runs Black, All Shall Perish, In the Midst of Lions). The label states that, "*Now We Are Free* blends metal and hardcore influences seamlessly and is a must have album for fans of Hatebreed and Living Sacrifice."

Dave Barnes new single "Mine To Love" off his upcoming studio album, *Stories To Tell*, is now available at iTunes. *Stories To Tell* is set for release on March 13, 2012 on Razor & Tie and features 11 new tracks produced by John Fields (Lifehouse, Switchfoot, Goo Goo Dolls).

Red kicks off its second headlining tour in five months, the *REDvolution Tour*, on Feb. 10. Visiting 20+ cities domestically, with special guests Thousand Foot Krutch, Manafest, Nine Lashes and KIROS. Red will hit Europe for a run by itself in April.

LIVE REPORT

Winter Jam 2012

January 22

REVIEW & PHOTOS BY NICOLE MURPHY

(Fort Wayne, IN)
Allen County War Memorial Coliseum.

We as Human set the tone for the night and that tone was rock. Performing while the arena lights are still on and everybody is walking in is not the easiest, but these guys captured the audience's attention.

For King and Country provided a melodic end to the "pre-jam." The hammering of the bass drum by both singers brought the crowd to feel the rhythm of the songs.

Finally the lights went down for the rest of the concert, which was perfect for **Dara Maclean**'s soulful performance. Maclean playing in this position gave the crowd a break from the loud, upbeat bands while bringing a joyful noise to their ears.

Leave it to **Group 1 Crew** to start the dance party. Everyone, young and old, was dancing to their songs. Their set also featured light-up binoculars and lighted outfits, which gave the audience even more to look at.

Building 429 brought the crowd to sing along. They started out their set with a heavier rock song. Their intensity in their opening impressed me and made me look forward to the rest of their set.

Winter Jam hosts, **Newsong**, perform every year and I look forward to their set every time. For their first song, a large banner came down in front of them. Throughout the song, a portrait of Jesus was digitally painted on the banner. This big entrance provided a great twist for those who have seen them perform at numerous *Winter Jam* concerts.

Kari Jobe came on after Newsong. I had heard from many sources that she puts on a good performance, and they were right. Kari Jobe is a genuine performer.

I was definitely looking forward to seeing **Peter Furler** as a solo artist. For this tour, he has brought Phil Joel, former Newsboys bandmate, out with him. Also appearing in Peter Furler's band was Dave Ghazarian from the band Superchick. What I love about Peter Furler's performance is the fact that he doesn't just sing, he preaches.

Following the usual *Winter Jam* intermission, it was time for **Sanctus Real**. The band started their performance out in different places in the crowd. Because *Winter Jam* attracts so many people, not everyone has an awesome view of the stage, but this allowed more people to get that front-row experience. The rest of the performance was just as good as the opening. In fact, I believe that Sanctus Real put on the best show that I've seen from them.

The long-anticipated band came on next, **Skillet**. There is only one word for their show: explosive. The band used pyro in almost every song they performed. It also wouldn't be a *Winter Jam* if a band wasn't elevated off of the ground while they played and Skillet brought that to the fans. Skillet was a great twist to this year's lineup, because it has been awhile since a hard rock band headlined *Winter Jam*.

Winter Jam prides itself as being fun for the whole family, and it is. With all the different genres of music, there is sure to be a band that you will love and you can't get a better deal than 10 bands for 10 dollars.

Photos (clockwise from top): Peter Furler (and Phil Joel); Skillet's pyro, Skillet's hydraulic riser; Building 429; For King & Country.

JOHN COOPER OF SKILLET

Photo: Reggie Edwards

SETH MORRISON OF SKILLET

Photo: Reggie Edwards

KEVINYOUNG OF DISCIPLE

Photo: Reggie Edwards

Album: *Set Sail and Seek...*
Label: Thumper Punk
Release Date: November 5, 2011
Members: Jason Martinez, vocals; Josh Galvan, guitar; Lupe Gutierrez, bass; Milo Zavala, drums
RIYL: The Clash, Street Dogs, The Ramones

thekingskids.com

THE KINGS KIDS

Hailing from Salinas, CA is a band of four punk rockers called The Kings Kids, whose ministry is playing hard music for Christ. While the band's message is scripturally anchored, their gritty, hard-driving, old-school punk sound is moving and infectious. TKK has shared stages with Total Chaos, C.J. Ramone, Guttermouth, Matt Freeman and Devils Brigade, Roger Miret and the Disasters, Flatfoot 56, and a host of other bands in the genre.

"This year will be 20 years," declares lead singer Jason Martinez on how long he's been singing in punk bands, "and then walking with the Lord now for eight years. We've had The Kings Kids going for seven years." Martinez, whose stage name is "J-Son," along with guitarist Josh Galvan and then-bassist Andrew Eclavea, started The Kings Kids in 2004. "When we played our first show we didn't know if we were going to get booed out and have beer bottles thrown at us," recalls Galvan, laughing. "The response has been really good. At times a little bit turbulent, but, for the most part, the word gets out there. Instead of people throwing stuff at us they were actually in the mosh pit, going crazy. God showed us at our very first show that it would work."

Set Sail and Seek... is The Kings Kids' latest record and the follow-up to their 2008 debut release, *Urgency!* Each of the 14 songs on the band's new album contains a positive message and, for the most part, antithetical to the punk songs that often sling rants of protest and rebellion. "Trust! Trust! Trust! Leave the old man in the dust!" is part of a verse in "Trust," an anthem of hope and redemption. The slower, "unpunked" ballad, "The Lighthouse," features Josh Galvan on vocals, and a touching song that the guitarist wrote about his own struggles and having faith to overcome them. "Jim Braddock" is a song inspired by the movie *Cinderella Man*, which starred Russell Crowe, who portrayed the legendary boxer. It's a story of a man who never gave up hope in the face of adversity.

It would seem like the hardest medium to convey a godly message with amplifiers would be punk rock. According to frontman Martinez, it's a doable thing, but with the Lord's help. "At first it was kind of difficult," he admits. "Before I came to Christ a lot of stuff went down. Me and my wife just separated and I had been in punk bands for many years singing about the opposite, you know – about total rebellion and stuff like that. So when I came to Christ I didn't really see punk rock music in my future, but the Lord called me back to the scene where I came from. So was it difficult? Yeah, it was at first. I remember opening the Bible a lot and asking God, 'What am I supposed to do?' He made it pretty clear. Our vision for The Kings Kids is really to be playing with all the punk bands – secular or not. I never wanted to be looked at as anything less, if that makes any sense. We kind of stuck to our guns playing an old-school punk rock style, but giving it the right message. We've shared stages with a lot of legendary punk bands that actually respect what we're about. For the most part, we go out and play and make good friends along the way. We're out there with the big dogs, and we're showing people that you can love God and also play really hard punk rock."

BY CHARLIE STEFFENS

Album: *World We View*
Label: Tooth & Nail
Release Date: February 14, 2012
Members: Jeremy Dunn, vocals; Noah Terrell, drums; Jared Lankford, bass; Adam Jefferson, guitar; Jonathan Jefferson, guitar
RIYL: Red, 12 Stones, Breaking Benjamin

ninelashes.com

NINE LASHES

Tooth & Nail Records will introduce Nine Lashes to the world through their label debut *World We View*, out February 14th. Nine Lashes brings heavy hitting rock in the vein of bands like Red, 12 Stones, and Breaking Benjamin. Frontman Jeremy Dunn took time out to talk about the album, the road, and how a ruptured appendix may have led to their signing with Tooth & Nail.

Describe your songwriting process. Do you go into it with a particular sound, idea or goal in mind, or just start jamming and see what happens? Do ideas generally start with one or two band members or is everyone involved from the start?

I think if you try to stick to a formula, you get more of a 'factory' product instead of a handcrafted one. Sometimes it starts with a guitar riff, sometimes with singing in the shower. Either way, it's extremely rare for an idea to fully mature without everyone involved, and it certainly never happens with just one of us.

An interesting chain of events led to your signing with Tooth & Nail. Would you mind sharing the story?

We contacted a local promoter about possibly getting a slot in a festival he organizes. He liked our CD but wanted to see if we could pull it off live, so we invited him to our next show. Humorously, he ended up having to leave early, because of a prior engagement and we thought he must have hated it. But, unknown to us at the time, he had a relationship with Trevor McNevan of Thousand Foot Krutch and he sent Trevor our CD. And if that "chance" wasn't crazy enough, Trevor would most likely have never had the time to listen to it had his appendix not ruptured. He was at home resting when he heard it. He then sent the album to Brandon Ebel at Tooth & Nail, and the ball really started rolling. So basically, it was all out of our hands. God was in control.

What was it like working with Aaron Sprinkle? What did he add to the record? Was there anything you learned along the way?

Aaron was awesome. We learned a lot about the recording process itself over the course of the month. We had only worked with one other producer, so it was cool to see the differences between them. Aaron really shined when it came to adding the "bells and whistles" to our songs. Piano here, synthesizer there; he always knew what it needed.

Are there offstage "roles" that each member plays in the band? If so, did everyone fall into these roles naturally or was it something you talked about?

We have all worn just about every hat at one point or another. Every move we make involves discussion. We try to even the load, but we definitely have talents and abilities we each bring to the table. Tank has been a spiritual leader for the majority of the journey, but as time passes we really try to even out that load, too, because sometimes it's going to be him that needs picking up.

What are the best and worst parts of being on tour? What aspects have been what you expected and what has surprised you – good or bad?

The worst part for me is being homesick. Everything else has been great. Touring has been pretty much how I expected, except that we don't get much time to sitesee. Usually, we don't have enough time to stop for anything other than gas.

Is there anything you'd like to add?

I just want people to know that, with God, all things are possible. And come see us in February!

BY TIM HALLILA

Album: *Crave*
Label: Fervent/Curb
Release Date: February 28, 2012
Members: Joel Smallbone; Luke Smallbone
RIYL: Coldplay, Newsboys

forkingandcountry.com

FOR KING & COUNTRY

What would this article have read like had the band answered the interview questions I emailed them? Perhaps we'll never know, but maybe their press bio will offer a decent substitute. What do you think?

Carrying a name that evokes substance and a sense of purpose, for KING & COUNTRY make their debut with music that more than lives up to their clever moniker. Enveloping their insightful lyrics in a sea of ear-grabbing melodies, brothers Joel and Luke have forged a distinctive sound that has earned them an enthusiastic fan base as well as the respect of industry professionals who keep tapping their music for use in high profile TV shows. Together, Joel and Luke ignite each other's individual passions to form a unique, distinctive voice that blends into simmering sibling harmony, unrivaled by any other collaborative group to date.

Born in Sydney, Australia and relocating with their family to Nashville, TN, Joel and Luke remember music being a constant presence in their life. Growing up in a large family of seven kids, the siblings began their creative experimentation early on, soaking up life experiences that would influence their musical future.

"Our father was a promoter in Australia and so we grew up as a musically-centered family. I remember going to these rock shows, sitting on his shoulders, plugging my ears. It was very influential at an early age and I saw the power of music and how a melody fused with a lyric can impact someone's life," recalls Joel. "Honestly, in a lot of ways I feel like music chose me and as I grew older, I made a clear decision to fully lean into it."

The group's strengths are showcased not only through their voices, but their name as well. The name, 'for KING & COUNTRY,' was decided on after several attempts to find a name that appropriately encompasses who they are as musicians as well as their passionate personalities.

"While working on our debut record, I came up with the idea of calling us 'All the Kings Men,' but it just didn't fit exactly with what we were looking for," said Luke. "We were in the studio with our producer and he said, 'what about for king and country?' The history of that phrase is that back in the olden days, the British would go into battle shouting, chanting, 'For King and Country,' sort of as an anthem of fighting for something that they believed wholeheartedly in. We all looked at each other in the studio and we just knew that was it."

With tracks produced by Shaun Shankel, Aqualung and Ben Glover, for KING & COUNTRY's debut album, Crave, is a vibrant collection of songs, marked by emotional honesty and a riveting transparency. The first single, "Busted Heart (Hold On to Me)" is among the duo's newer compositions and was inspired from a conversation on the brokenness that every person feels at some point in their life.

"There comes those defining moments in each of our lives where we so severely need someone to hold on to us," explains Joel. "It seems we are all, in different ways, shapes and forms, busted to some degree. This song is an honest confessional of: 'I can't do this thing called life on my own. I need something, or more specifically, someone greater than myself to hold on to me."

KING & COUNTRY's music continues to gain momentum with fans and peers alike as several album tracks have already been featured in primetime television spots. "Love's to Blame" and "People Change" have been featured on the popular The CW series, "The Vampire Diaries" and "Light It Up" and "Sane" have been heard on the Lifetime network's "Drop Dead Diva."

The song "Light It Up," a tangible anthem for the group, was inspired by a friend of theirs who has had a long standing struggle with depression.

"For a time, our friend lived in a house where he would stuff blankets in the windows, switch off the lights and live for days at a time alone and in literal darkness," says Luke. "We wrote this song for him, but for the longest time couldn't work up the courage to tell him. Partly because it was his favorite tune and also because we were afraid of how he would handle it."

When Joel and Luke finally worked up the courage to tell him, their friend stood up, walked out of the room, got in his car and drove off. Roughly 20 minutes passed until he called them up and with tears in his voice saying, "Thank you for writing that song for me. It moves me, encourages me, it gives me hope."

Poignant stories and experiences like these are merely one of the many that spark for KING & COUNTRY's underlying message and what ultimately drives both Joel and Luke in the authenticity behind their music and lyrics.

"We want to deliver a message that is about believing in something much bigger than oneself," explains Luke. "The title track of the album has a line in the chorus that very plainly says, 'hope is what we crave.' You can confidently go through the ups and downs in your life because you know that life isn't all about you and what you do but rather the hope and salvation of Christ."

"We want to be known for writing music that is authentic, real and from the heart," adds Joel. "Music has been a very therapeutic thing for us. There's a lot of blood, sweat and tears that went into this record and what spurred us on is this whole idea that we can make a difference. That music, our music, can have the power to impact someone's life for the better."

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Album: *S/T*
Label: Slospeak
Release Date: January 24, 2012
Members: Josh Randolph, vocals/keys; Chad Shirrell, vocals/guitar; Dalton Meyers, guitar; Dan Voris, drums; Nick Berry, bass
RIYL: Jimmy Eat World, Switchfoot, Relient K, Paramore

slospeak.com/pioneer

PIONEER

Though Indianapolis's News from Verona is history, the band's personnel remains the same. The Indianapolis rockers are treading a new path as Pioneer. "We had been doing the News from Verona thing for about three years and we were writing new songs over the summer," drummer Dan Voris says. "Once we started seeing them taking shape, Chad [Shirrell], our guitarist and I, thought this was a different project from what Verona ever was. So, we just wanted to give ourselves a fresh start. We were at a vulnerable spot in our career. We put so much into this and poured our hearts and souls into it. It just had a very different feel. It's a lot more rock 'n' roll, which we think is awesome.

"We thought about something that embodied what we were doing now. And then the name Pioneer came up. It was actually from a poem by Walt Whitman called 'Pioneers! O Pioneers!' That poem just spoke novels to our band. First of all, it's just very American-spirited. It's something we've instilled in this entire project. It's just the idea of Western youth today going out and blazing a trail, working for something bigger than yourself, which is everything this project embodied.

"The album tells a story, for sure. Looking back on your life, seeing things you need to change or what you want to happen and figuring it out as you go. I'm super pumped about it. It's just a rock 'n' roll album, which is what I'm all about, so I couldn't be happier. It's just been a really awesome experience. We're super blessed to be given the team that we have.

"We love the Church and we love being able to be part of the Christian music scene," Voris says proudly. "We're all kind of punk rock at heart and we all grew up playing these dirty punk rock clubs, where we were usually the only Christian band on the bill. We've gone out on tour with several non-Christian bands, so our heart is in the mainstream as well. Obviously, that's a lot of the music we listen to. But our spirituality, our faith, Christianity, is the backbone of what we do and it's who we are. We use our platform that we've been given as a band to reach kids. The way we do that is, hopefully, put on a killer rock 'n' roll show and then we'll stay and talk to every single person. The only reason that we can even get through some of the long, grueling tours – even though it's super fun – is knowing that you could change a kid's life that night."

Voris is fired up about getting out on the road with his band. "The plan is to be on the road as much as possible, and hopefully that works out. Next week we hit the road with Manic Drive for a month, so that'll be cool. Right now an April tour is being set up. Then it's festival time, and we're going to hit every big festival in the nation, hopefully with some scattered dates in between. We'll just keep the cycle going."

"News from Verona was how we cut our teeth," the drummer admits. "We had no clue what we were doing. I didn't even know how to do a drum fill. I knew how to keep a beat when we first started, but I was not a good drummer. I just knew that I liked rock 'n' roll and that I love to hit things really hard." He continues, "With News from Verona we really had a chance to cut our teeth and (learn) how to be a band," as if to explain that his time playing in his former band wasn't all for naught. "It's how we got to this point now. We're super appreciative of it. We're not ashamed of it, in the least, but this is a new phase in our life."

BY CHARLIE STEFFENS

Nick Litrenta sat down with Morgan Wright of I, The Breather, where they talked about the new record and what's new with them. Go see them on tour with August Burns Red this winter and pick up their new album on Sumerian Records.

I, The Breather is recording the follow-up on Sumerian Records. Talk about some things that you will be doing on the new record.
This record really pushed us as a band. There are a lot of things on this record that we wouldn't normally do. Awesome guitar work complemented by the drums and very driven vocals. Justin put a lot of time into pushing himself to write harder material. It was a challenge learning these songs. The final product of all these songs is amazing. I'm very very happy the way everything has turned out.

Who did you record with?
We recorded our record with producers Paul Leavitt (All Time Low, Senses Fail, Conditions, Circa Survive) and Taylor Larson.

When will it be released?
We will be releasing this CD while out on tour with August Burns Red. So it should be out between the January-to-March time range.

What's new with the band?
We've just been heavily focused on this record. This is a big release for us, so we really want to make each song the best it can be. With the help from Paul and Taylor we've changed, experimented with our music and made all these songs structurally sound and the best they can be. I'm so pumped on this whole entire CD.

Are you doing anything crazy, how are you pushing the boundaries?
We did some stuff outside of the box on this CD. We recorded a really dark-sounding song with a seven-string tuned to G. The song turned out amazing; it's one of my favorites on the record. It definitely brings out a new dynamic to our sound. There's also piano on songs, strings, so we definitely stepped out of our box and added a bunch of stuff we wouldn't have normally done.

What kinds of tours do you have lined up for the new year?
We will be hitting the road with August Burns Red in January. Following that a European tour is in the works. So our touring schedule will be pretty awesome this year!

You recently were on Fox News, talk about that experience.
The Fox News gig was awesome. My dad is an anchor on the Fox News Channel as well a singer/songwriter. Governor Mike Huckabee invited myself, my dad and my brother on the show to cover a Marvin Gaye song, as well as a Christmas special to be seen this December. It was a blast!

Any collaborations you can give us a hint on?
We hit up our good friend Micah Kinard of Oh, Sleeper to lay down some guest vocals on the record.

Any cities ITB has not visited yet, that you are excited for?
Definitely excited to hit all of Canada! We've never been there. Also I'm so pumped to hit Chicago, I love that city.

There's a cool promo tour video on YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8sGHtFnM2I or just search "August Burns Red Winter Tour").

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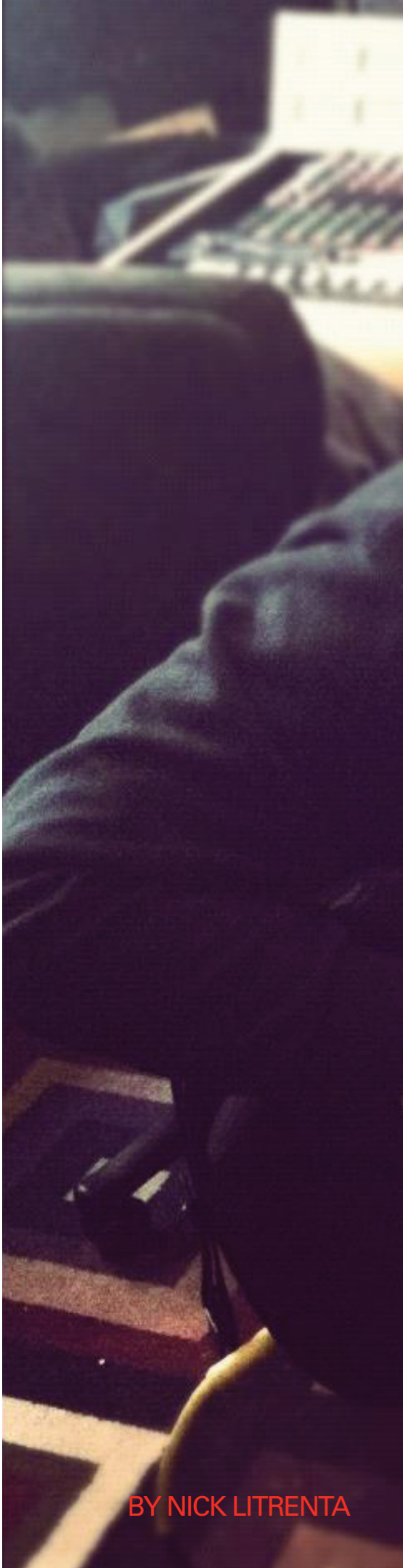

BY NICK LITRENTA

I have known Blake Martin from A Plea For Purging about four years or so. It was not till their record *Depravity* that I became a fan. It took me about that long to get their humor as well. It was not till last year that I found out that Blake's first name was Ryan and Blake was his middle name. Just like anyone in the metal scene we all like the softer side of music. Blake is just one of many that have tried their hand at their softer side of their love of music. Last year Blake put up three songs and an original called "Fragile," a U2 cover along with a Thrice cover. I was not surprised on how amazing the songs were. Like many others, I wanted more. Now a year later Blake has rerecorded "Fragile" and four new songs for his first EP. I had a chance to ask the most burning questions we all wanted to know and find out if one rumor was true.

Last year around this time you posted "Fragile" along with the U2 and Thrice covers. When did you start thinking about doing a solo project? How long did it take from it being idea to writing and recording the songs two years ago?
Well, I never had the inclination to pursue anything "solo" really, but I did want to be making music outside of Plea. I love metal, but there are so many other bands and artists of different genres that I listen to. I wanted an outlet for those influences. There isn't a specific moment where the idea came into being. I've been writing music like this since high school. I just never had the means to record it and release it until recently. These 5 songs have been rolling around my head for the past year or so. After Plea did our headlining fall tour, I suddenly had the time at home to record them and release them. So I did!

With your commitment with Plea last year, where did you find time to write and record the rest of the songs to turn them into a EP?
Over this past year, Plea has toured a little less than years past. All of us were nailing down apartments and houses, John got married, etc… We were all trying to invest a little more into our home life than before. That being said, as soon as I settled into my house, I set up a small project studio and started laying down anything and everything. Overall, I just poked around with it all between tours. I'm trying to not have a concrete timetable for releases or anything. Just trying to enjoy the process!

Was it hard to transition from writing music for Plea to writing for the EP?
Not really. In some ways it came more naturally than writing heavy stuff, since this is more along the lines of what I grew up on. My first guitar was an acoustic and I played in church quite a bit. I didn't have an electric guitar until a few years later. Heavy music wasn't a part of my life until the very end of high school.

Where did you record *Fragile* and how long did it take? Are there any other players that helped lay down other guitar parts?
I have a very modest little studio setup in my house and that's where all of it was recorded, mixed and mastered. The whole project took about a month and a half from beginning to end once I decided what songs would be on the EP. I didn't have any guests on the release this time around. This is mostly due to me just wanting to step out on my own on this release. I really tried to keep it stripped-down and simple.

Where you surprised that Plea fans liked the softer side of your musical talent?
Not at all! We've been sneaking some slower jams into the past couple Plea records and the responses have been great! That's definitely part of the reason that I decided to put something chill out. If you like good music, you're going to appreciate it, no matter the medium. And I'm glad a lot of Plea fans can recognize that.

Are there any plans to tour for the EP, or play these songs live at home in Nashville?
That's definitely something I've been tossing around. I'd like to put out a few more songs, so my show could be longer than 15 minutes (laughs)! As of now, nothing is scheduled, but who knows … something may pop up soon!

What band or solo artist would you want to do a solo tour with if you got offered?
Well, if I could choose, I'd say Dustin Kensrue or Dallas Green … or David Bazan. All three are pretty big influences on my songwriting.

You put the EP out digitally. Will it ever make it to other formats, like vinyl, cassette, four-track, or CD?
Ultimately, I would love for that to happen. However, pressing CDs is a costly endeavor for someone with no financial backing from a label whatsoever. It costs over $1,000 to replicate CDs and even more for vinyl. It costs very little for digital distribution so that's why I went for that this time. If I sell a crazy amount of copies digitally, maybe I would soak that money back into printing some vinyl or something. I love vinyl. Because I'm a total hipster.

Every singer/songwriter has stories behind their songs. Are there any stories behind one or two of the songs people have been asking you about that you would like to share here?
Overall, there are a few songs about relationships I have (or) had. I'd probably like to steer clear of specifics and let the listener interpret them for what *they* hear in the songs. I like that. I will say that "Wandering Souls" was written near the end of recording Plea's newest album in

BY ROB SHAMELESS

"If you like good music, you're going to appreciate it, no matter the medium."

Michigan. We had been gone for over a month and we were all pretty homesick. One night at the hotel, I just took my guitar out to the van and started writing. The song just talks about tour and trying to find stability when all you do is move around. I was obviously pretty homesick! (laughs)

Did Facedown help you get the record on iTunes and all the other online sources for fans to buy *Fragile*? How was their response to the record?
No, (although Jason and Virginia absolutely rule!) I did everything on my own this time around. They posted something about it on their Facebook page, which was much appreciated. In the ever-changing climate of the music industry, there have been some really cool tools and websites created to help independent musicians get their music out there. It's actually relatively easy and inexpensive to get music on those sites.

What are your thoughts on Spotify as a solo artist and as a member of a band? Have you seen less or more sales because of its service?
I don't really have an opinion on Spotify just yet. I just downloaded it last week and have only used it twice (laughs)! As far as sales, I won't know any figures for a few more weeks. If I sell 10 copies, I'll be pumped!

I'll end this with a rumor I heard. Rumor has it that the cover was taken on a iPhone with Instagram while you and the rest of Plea where riding on motorcycles. Was that hard to do and how many photos did you have to take to get the right one?
(laughs) Well, basically I had to put my Harley on autopilot while I hopped onto Andy's bike. I climbed up his back, stood on his shoulders and snagged the pic. Then I jumped back on my bike, turned off the autopilot, whipped out our pistols, shot them in the air, and we cruised into the Nashville sunset. It was one for the books.

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MATTIE MONTGOMERY IS MANY THINGS. HE' FATHER, A SINGER IN A BAND. HE'S FOCUSED HIS FAMILY, HIS LIFE AND HIS FANS. BUT MOR THESE THINGS, MATTIE MONTGOMERY IS SIN FOLLOWER OF JESUS.

He wants to make a difference in the world. He wants to see a transformation that will change the world. And he wants everyone that hears him to catch the vision that they can change the world in ways that are more than just playing in a band. Mattie wants to see people begin to dream bigger than just music or touring or putting out albums. He wants to see them dream about a revolution.

Mattie takes his calling seriously. He knows the task that God has put in front of him:

> *"Obviously, He's called [my wife and me] to be parents. Obviously, He's called us to be a husband and wife. And he's called me to be in this band and to be reaching kids."*

He wants to see each and every person "obey the Lord and to listen until they get a clear vision of what it is that God has called them to and then to carry that vision out no matter what it costs." It breaks his heart when he hears people say about a band that he knows are only paying lip service to God, "They're totally worth following. They're a Christian band, my parents are Christians and they love that I listen to them."

Mattie warns us that rather than valuing people because of what they say or what they sing about or how talented they are, we are to listen to the Holy Spirit in us. He says, "If the Spirit is bearing witness to what this person is saying, then we should get behind it and cheer it on and support it and stand under it. But if what this person is saying is hollow and empty and really is not moving the Spirit, then we need to not waste our time on it no matter how good it sounds."

At a New Year's Eve show in 2010, Mattie's perspective was changed from that of a friend and a brother to more like a father. As the heart of a father was born in him, he realized that many of the kids attending had either never had a father or a father's blessing. That night he declared:

> *"I will fight for you. I will labor for you in a place of prayer. I will pick a fight with anything that is picking a fight with you and just release to you my blessing and my favor and my honor even if your father never has."*

At For Today shows, Mattie sees deep levels of brokenness and abandonment in people and wants to say to each of them, "I see something valuable in you, and I believe that you can make a tremendous impact."

Now, as Mattie enters the world of being a dad to his own son, he focuses his insight and vision into raising his son. Not too long ago, while asking God for release from insecurity and fear of man, Mattie received a promise from the Lord. Days before his son was born, he remembered that promise and sat on the front porch of his home whittling a block of wood.

As he coaxed the form of a star from the wood, he began to see that whittling is the same strategy that a man of discernment should apply to raising children. Mattie says, "I look at that block of wood, and I know there's a star in here somewhere, and I just have to figure out where it is, and then cut away everything that's not a star." And with that simple truth, Mattie took on his strategy for raising his son and future children as well as spiritual sons and daughters, "I have to look at them with insight and with vision and say, 'This is what God has placed in them.' And then I have to cut away everything else. I have to cut away all the pride, all the self-centeredness, all of the fear and anxiety and worry and doubt and unbelief — all of the things that will muddy up the image of what God intended for them to be so that they can be really seen for what they are and what they were made to be."

With the *Fight the Silence Tour*, For Today hopes to give kids visions of things that they can do that will whittle away at the things that aren't in God's plan for them. Mattie's hope is to give everyone who attends the tour a glimpse of what can be done outside of music and of themselves, to have something they believe in and can grasp onto, something that gives them a greater view of the world. They've partnered with four social justice organizations to represent what some people are doing to change the world around them.

Mattie points to the founder of Skate 4 Cancer who was a kid that liked skateboarding and hated cancer. Now,

BY CRISTINA AGUIRRE

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Skate 4 Cancer strives to foster public awareness of cancers that can be avoided through early detection and healthy lifestyles.

Pick A Pocket is also joining the tour, and Mattie says, "A lot of the time the reason that extreme poverty goes unaddressed or unchecked is because people in the United
States live in this little bubble where poor people are people that can't afford a big-screen TV." Pick A Pocket is a group of friends who hope to connect the world's poorest people and new generations of activists who want to help make the world a better place.

Invisible Children is working to raise awareness of the plight of children in Africa who are being forced, under the threat of death, to fight in a war. Invisible Children rebuilds schools, educates future leaders and provides jobs in Northern Uganda.

And finally, Mattie speaks in support of XXX Church by saying, "XXX Church is addressing the devastating nature of sexual dysfunction in our culture. Divorce is at the highest rate it's ever been. Rape is at the highest rate it's ever been. Unwanted pregnancy is at the highest rate it's ever been, and as a result, abortion is at the highest rate it's ever been in history. We, as a culture, have so glorified sexuality and have made it so accessible to people, that they get in their mind that sexual intimacy is only one click away."

Mattie Montgomery wants many things. He wants to see people changed and transformed and walking in their destiny. He wants to be focused on character and discernment. But more than any of these things, Mattie Montgomery wants to be called a son of God.

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Kutless on Kutless.

In anticipation of their seventh album, members of Kutless Jeff Gilbert (drums) and James Mead (guitar) sat down to chat with each other … at their computers. With the members of Kutless being spread out over three states, Mead and Jon Micah Sumrall (vocals) still living in their home city and state of Portland, OR, Gilbert and Nick De Partee (guitar) living in Franklin, TN, and bassist Dave Luetkenhoelter living in Dallas, TX, it's a rarity that the band members are together during time off. Kutless has been relishing in some time at home to wrap up a very busy 2011, in which they toured in 5 different countries, and performed 4 tours including their first-ever appearance on *Winter Jam Tour Spectacular*. During their busy year of travel they also recorded a new full-length record, titled *Believer*, due out in February. To discuss their new record and answer the questions weighing on the mind of the public, James and Jeff have arranged this interview. In fact … James wrote this, um … I mean, I'm James, and I wrote this.

James: Dear Jeff, what makes this record different from your last release, *It Is Well* (2009)? Is it rock, or worship?
Jeff: Hi James! This is no secret to you, but we're not categorizing our records anymore. This is a compilation of songs that are from the experience of living our lives for Jesus Christ individually and collectively. So yes, we love rock music, we love making rock music, so there is some rock music on this record. And yes, we love to worship and to lead worship, so there are some worshipful songs on this record. And sometimes the worship songs are rock songs.

James: I noticed (while I was recording the record with you) that Kutless decided to use two producers on this record. What strengths did each producer contribute to the project?
Jeff: Ah yes, good question. It was clear that we all wanted to work with Dave Lubben again. He doesn't only bring a lot to the table as a producer and songwriter, but his main focus is on making sure everyone is connected and focused spiritually. With *It Is Well* being categorized as a worship record, it is imperative for the worship leaders to be edified in worship before leading. We have taken that mindset and brought it into whatever we do, including recording 10 tracks with Dave in Portland. Chris Stevens is a guy who we have heard so many great things about. He has produced artists like TobyMac, Sanctus Real, and Mandisa. We have never recorded new music in Nashville before, so we gave it some thought and asked him to write and record some music with us. We recorded six songs with Chris and had an absolute blast.

James: What sort of drums did you use to record your "larger-than-life," bombastic drum sounds?
Jeff: I'm so glad you described them as bombastic! In Portland, I had a big collection of Truth Custom Drums, including a 26x14" kick, 13x8" rack tom, and 16x16" floor tom and about nine different snare drums. Our engineer also brought in some random old vintage drums that were super cool.

James: Could you please be more specific?
Jeff:

James: I understand (from being there with you) that you and the rest of Kutless were studying the book of Philippians together during the Portland sessions. Did you guys see any spiritual growth from that? Why that particular book?
Jeff: Absolutely. That book is a breakdown of remembering how to treat people. Jesus' love is defined as being humble and full of grace, so quick to forgive and to serve. It's a perfect book for a band to go through, since we are with each other so many days out of the year that we are truly like five brothers. Sometimes the respect level for each other can go down a bit, and we need solid reminders of how to treat each other the way Christ would.

James: What is the title *Believer* meant to convey?
Jeff: That we are believers in Jesus Christ. That's what the record is about, and that's what we are about. We are praying that people who don't know Jesus will get the most real idea of who He is through our music. Not judgmental, critical or harsh. But loving, caring, forgiving and fulfilling.

James: From what I can see (from observing all of us when we're together), Kutless is a very tight-knit family. Any new milestones this year, as a family?
Jeff: Well, at the end of 2010, my wife and I ushered in our first son, Slater Thomas! He's already 14 months old! Also, Nick married his sweetheart, Allisondra. We love her and are so happy for them.

James: Is it hard for all the members of Kutless to live so far apart from each other?
Jeff: Yes and no. It's tough, because we would like to practice new ideas and write together more often. But we also need personal family time away from all the band stuff and I have a feeling we wouldn't do that as well if we all lived in the same area. So, it's definitely bittersweet.

James: Is it hard for all the members of Kutless to decide where to eat together?
Jeff: Yes, it's hard for us all to decide anything together. It's like herding squirrels.

James: What sort of life lessons have you learned together from having songs like "Strong Tower" and "What Faith Can Do?"
Jeff: That we are not the main plot. Jesus is the main plot and we are just supporting characters to help tell the story.

James: What are some of your interests, as a band, outside of Kutless itself?
Jeff: Collectively, as a band, we are really tight friends. We also have the same heartbeat when it comes to ministry. One thing that comes to mind is a ministry called Compassion International. It is a child sponsorship program with bases all around the world. It provides everything from nutrition to education, but most importantly, they teach the Gospel of Jesus in their communities. We have taken a handful of trips to visit children that we personally sponsor and I got the privilege of going to Tanzania, Africa to meet my sponsored child, David. We also love leading worship at Kutless' home church, Athey Creek Christian Fellowship. As for me personally, I love art of all kinds. I love antiques and anything from history. My wife and I love to travel, see new places and eat new foods. I'm also heavily involved with a ministry/movement called The Whosoevers. [thewhosoevers.com]

"...I require lots of forgiveness."

James: Which bands were really inspirational to you during the recording of *Believer*?
Jeff: I like a wide variety of music. While making that record I listened to a couple tracks off of 30 Seconds To Mars album, *This Is War*. I think John Mark McMillan is awesome. I have always loved Sigur Rós, I've been really into atmospheric music for a while now. Foo Fighters is always a staple, too.

James: Could you please be more specific?
Jeff: 30 Seconds To Mars: "Closer to the Edge"
John Mark McMillan: "How He Loves"
Sigur Rós: "Takk"
Foo Fighters: "Razor"

James: What is the hardest part of touring as much as you do?
Jeff: Being away from my family. It's nearly impossible to balance the duties of husband/daddy and full-time touring musician. I require lots of forgiveness.

James: What are some of the most positive aspects of being on tour?
Jeff: The people you get to meet and the stories you get to hear. I love people and I get to meet a lot of them. I also love playing music with my friends.

James: Why does Kutless drink so much coffee? (except for Jon Micah)
Jeff: I think it is ceremonial for us. It's something that we connect on and something that we all love. When the day starts to drag or get hectic, at the perfect time someone will send a group text that writes "fresh coffee on bus." We all congregate there to reset, including other bands now. (smiles) Thank you, Black Rock Coffee, for donating delicious cups of joy to us.

James: Of the above questions, which is your favorite? Why?
Jeff: The ones where you ask me to be more specific. Because people reading periodicals such as this one prefer specifics instead of vagueness.

James: Could you please be more specific?
Jeff: Such as when someone asks you a "yes or no" question desiring a much more robust answer than the answer being yes and/or no. You then proceed to answer robustly, being specific in communicating your thoughts or you remain vague – being that you don't continue with specificity and conclude in vagueness.

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This is th

BY DAN MACINTOSH & DOUG

The long-winded new album's title, *Give Us Rest (A Requiem Mass in C [The Happiest of All Keys])*, coincides with one of the unhappiest moments for David Crowder Band fans: specifically, the end of the band as we know it. However, deciding to put this popular praise and worship act's recording and touring career to rest may have been the easiest part of the whole momentous process.

"You can just imagine the stuff that's rattling around inside of us," Crowder reflects, when asked to try and sum up a surprising ultimatum that was quite rattling to most everyone, to say the least. "Reaching the decision to do that [breaking up the band] was probably the easiest part," he states, matter-of-factly. "All of us were just right on the same page."

To put it into history book terms, though, this 'calling it a day' page was almost written once before. That is, until the unanimous choice was made to keep the DCB bus rolling.

"We've done this twice now," Crowder explains. "We had a three-record deal with the first contract, and when we were trying to decide if we'd do another two records, we had the same exact conversation. 'Hey, is this what we're supposed to be doing? Does everybody have this sense of compelling that this is exactly where we need to be and what we need to be about and what we need to be up to? And it was a resounding 'yes!' last go around. And this

he* end.

JG VAN PELT

time it was just, 'Nah, it's the end of it.' We could never see past record six. I don't know if we even talked about that back in the day when we were hanging about another record, but we had this arc of the six records that were all interconnected, but we could just not see past record six. So we threw our ideas around, but nothing would feel like it stuck, so when we got to this moment, it was all of us on the same page going, 'This is a period, end of sentence. Time to move on. To what, we don't know, but there's something that's supposed to be different than this in the future.'"

Making such a final decision to call it quits is one thing, but knowing how to carry it out is quite another matter.

"That's all bittersweet," comments Crowder. "(You) know you're doing what you're supposed to be doing, but you've still got this physical attachment to that thing you've loved being a part of for the past twelve years now. That part's hard. The most startling thing for me is just not being in their presence every single day. You know, for twelve years we've been stuck at each other's near proximity 24/7 most days a year. It was almost like a collective mind; a hive of sorts where we shared information. It was like Google, but better because you didn't have to reach in your pocket. That's why it's been really pretty bizarre."

In addition to the sheer physical nature of ending band life, there's also all the related emotions that come along with it.

Crowder well remembers the moment when he could no longer control his emotions of this impending split.

"We started the last tour in Austin, and on the first night a bunch of UBC (United Baptist Church) folks came down, and so there's tons of friends there," he remembers." At the very end of the show, I was just trying to say 'thank you' to the fans and all the people who have attached to our music over the years, whether it be recently or long ago, and I went into a spiel about how much it's meant to be a part of this thing; these guys are just unbelievable folks and I just love 'em and it's been amazing making music, and I got a little choked up. I was, like, 'Oh no! This is not gonna be good. I am in for it.' And it turned out, the rest of the tour, nothin'. I'd go into the same spiel and I could feel it beneath the surface, but nothing that wasn't controllable. And then on the last night, I was all braced. This was gonna be it.

"And I, Aaaaggghhh, got close. Well then, when we got to the very last date, which was January in the Dome in Atlanta, Georgia at the Passion conference, with 45,000 college students in a room together – and we started in the collegiate setting – so that was just perfect. It was with the Passion guys, so it's some of our best friends on the planet; the people that have carried this music with us for these twelve years now. So that was perfect. We couldn't have scripted all that better. So I thought this was going to be it, man. I hope I can get through this set. And sure enough, just fine. We get done and I'm walking off stage and I see all the band wives are standing there just off stage. So I immediately went to them and I was just going to say, 'Thank you guys so much for all the sacrifice. For carrying this in a way we can't even know.' And I got about a word into it, and it all came – right then. I was just a wreck for about 30-minutes. It was awesome. It's been a special thing. It's felt like family. And we couldn't be prouder of the group of … the little bit of work we have that's collected. It's amazing."

Although comfortable with his change in plans, this Texan with the strangest hair since Lyle Lovett knows full well that this career move does not make commercial sense. More than likely, the David Crowder Band would have only gotten bigger if they'd decided to continue on.

"The other side, that I think is the best part of the story, is that the career arc of the David Crowder Band – in terms of cultural success, as far as what we breathe in and out, what is successful – is that this is the dumbest time ever to walk away. Every record has been released and been a bigger record than the one prior to it," he confesses. "This last one [album] that just came out, it's doing better than anything we've done prior. So on paper, it's the dumbest thing ever. But what has been the best part about being in this band is that we've gathered ourselves around the idea of this kingdom that's entirely upside down. The last are first. The poor are rich. Out of death comes life. To be here at the end of the thing when God's called and asked for sacrifice and obedience; to be with people who gladly open their hand and let go without having something they know they can grab onto next, is humbling, man, and makes me love them even more deeply and also creates a lot of excitement for the future, knowing that when God asks you to take a step of faith, that there's something beautiful waiting."

With its journey at an end, it is now an excellent time to look back on the fruitful road the David Crowder Band has traveled together. Crowder is fully confident that his band of rocking worshipers has done well and accomplished many things, even though there wasn't really any master plan [in their minds, at least]. Surprisingly, though, friendship-building is the first success element that comes to his mind when Crowder is asked to reflect back over the years.

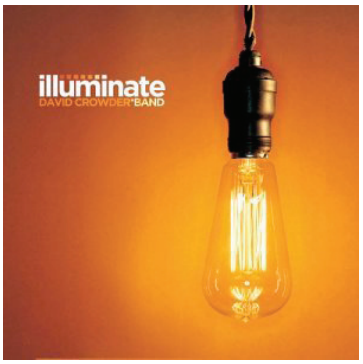
"Really, we were never really goal-oriented," admits Crowder. "For me, the thing that feels awesome about the whole deal is that we got to the end of the thing and still relationship was the centerpiece. When we got together, relationship was the foundational element. Before we made music, we had relationship and music came from relationship, rather than the inverse. And then here at the end, those things are still intact and deeper than they were in the beginning and that part feels very successful."

"...what has been the best part about being in this band is that we've gathered ourselves around the idea of this kingdom that's entirely upside down. The last are first. The poor are rich. Out of death comes life."

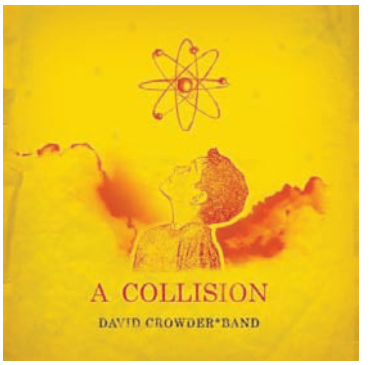
Of course, Crowder is also proud of the music the group has created, as well he should be.

"We had this arc of a story, in a sense, that we wanted these six records to … we feel like we did what we set out to do, in terms of the creation of music and the collecting of all those songs in their respective format," he says. "So that part of it, I don't think we could be more excited about."

Even when asked to think back to the very beginning, which is hard ("Dude! I can't hardly remember yesterday. That's hilarious"), Crowder comes back again to the formation of close relationships when discussing *Can You Hear Us?*, the first David Crowder Band full-length. "It's all about hanging and relationships," he repeats. "All the music stuff just takes care of itself, if you're just treating each other right and having a great time together," he adds. "Man, that was a blast!" It didn't hurt that that particular record was made in a barn and that the guys spent a lot of time playing daredevil on a couple of handy trampolines. "Every record, I look back and think of those relational moments," says Crowder, further driving home the point. In addition to plenty of social interaction, Crowder also learned from the start that this group needs a lot of time to be creative; they cannot summon imagination on the clock.



The principle that creativity takes time carried on with the next album, *Illuminate*. However, lights of ideas were about the only 'lights' going on during that recording. "The weird part," Crowder explains, "is we were making a record called *Illuminate*, and there were no lights in the building at all. They didn't initially have lights. We had to bring all manner of lamps and light into the place to see. That was awesome." Well, he can smile about it now…



What separated *A Collision Or (3 + 4 + 7)*, the third album, from the first two was planning. "We completely mapped that one out before we hit the record button," Crowder recalls. "It was all a Word document. We didn't tell anybody at the time, but it was a concept record about death, and there were gonna be three different deaths that were represented in the work, so that was really cool to follow a script of sorts. We had this arc, where these records were connected and have siblings, and the creation story is the outline to give us boundaries for what we wanted to do with the respective records, so Day 1 is related to Day 4; let there be light, and then sun and moon appear. So there's this connectivity that's loose and yet very obvious."

With *Remedy*, the band took a kind of step back, sonically speaking, so to speak.

"We wanted to simplify things because that's where we started with *Can You Hear Us?*," Crowder explains. "It's a very straight-forward record. [With] *Remedy*, we wanted to do the same thing. *Remedy* is about our actions and interactions with the world and people we live among. What is our social responsibility as Christians? Does our faith move from our heart and mind to our body and the way it works in the world? So that record was our first overt social statement, and one we really enjoyed talking about. And that was part of the reason why it was good to have it such a simple collection of songs,

because we wanted our voice, in a sense, to tie back to the first record, to be the thing we were wanting to talk about."

With the fifth album, *Church Music*, the group made a rule that all the instrumentation would be computer-generated. The band wanted this latest album to be more in line with the sounds being played at the time on secular radio, rather than the sort of U2/Coldplay sound that was so prevalent on Christian radio. "If everything we encounter outside of our church cultural space has these tonalities, and if you can't get away from the sound, yet it's absent in the church settings, we thought, let's give it a shot," Crowder elaborates. It's easily the album the group is most excited about from a technical standpoint.

The last album, *Give Us Rest (A Requiem Mass in C [The Happiest of All Keys])*, you might say, brings the band full circle, while all the while incorporating much of what they've accomplished along the way. "It feels like all the things we've done, in the previous five records, is now all in one spot," says Crowder. "All of the sounds, and the colors and the tonalities of the Crowder Band are now in one place together. We found a way to glue it all together."

Although the musicians from the former Crowder band will continue to create and produce music together in some form or other, Crowder is a little vague about what the future holds for him. "I feel like I know nothing about what I've done," Crowder admits. "I can't wait to see what's ahead, since I feel like I'm being formed in a way that I will be something interesting down the road." Heck, he might end up becoming something cooler than Google, Facebook and Twitter combined.

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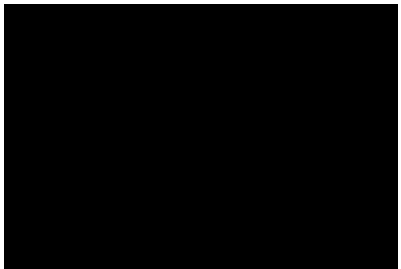

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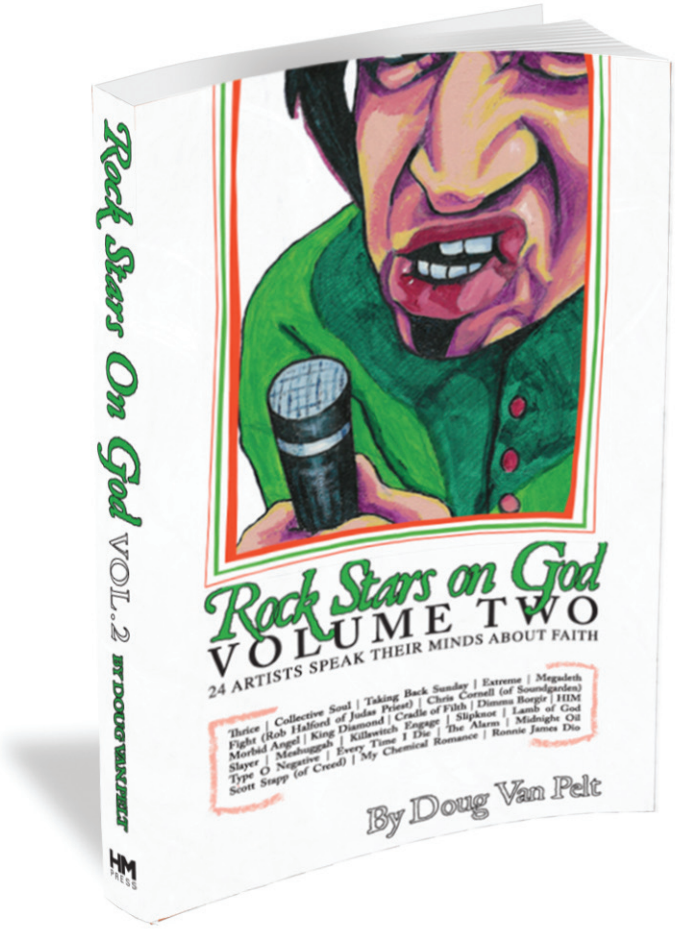

Volume 2 of the popular *Rock Stars on God* series. This collection of 25 interviews from the pages of HM Magazine features:

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What **Extreme** Says

HERE'S ANOTHER CLASSIC INTERVIEW FROM THE PAGES OF HM (AND THE SOON-TO-BE-RELEASED *ROCK STARS ON GOD, VOLUME 2* BOOK ON HM PRESS).

A&M RECORDING ARTISTS EXTREME BLEW INTO AUSTIN, TEXAS RECENTLY, MUCH TO THE DELIGHT OF A PACKED CLUB CALLED THE BACK ROOM. AFTERWARDS, HEAVEN'S METAL'S DOUG VAN PELT HAD THE CHANCE TO TALK WITH VOCALIST GARY CHERONE LISTEN IN ON THE CONVERSATION.

What are you trying to say with Pornographitti?
"It's a conceptual album ... it does have a story line. We don't throw the word 'concept' in the audience's face, like *The Wall*, or *Operation Mindcrime*. I think that scares people. It's easier to swallow a song rather than a whole record. We want people to like the songs and we want them to stand on their own. If they want to read between the lines and get involved in the lyrics, there is a story line.

"It's based around this kid named Francis – his trials and tribulations and what he goes through in life. He's not a crazy kid, he's just a normal kid that's been subjected to his time. He's just like you and me. We all have our good and bad. *Pornograffiti* is another name for the 'Decadence Dance' or the world. As far as what we're trying to say, it's a trip through the world seen through a kid who's been tainted by life and how he gets through it. We could've gone into other subjects, but we dealt with the sexual situation that he had to go through and how he deals with it."

What are your views on pornography?
I'm a red blooded, American heterosexual male who loves the female body. I look at *Playboy* just as much as anyone else. As far as pornography, too much of anything is going to take its toll. I'm not a 'right-wing rock star,' as Woody Allen might say, but I'm concerned with society's lines that keep on getting crossed. Maybe we've opened one too many Pandora's boxes. You really can't turn back the time-table. Maybe we are headed for a fall. That's what 'Decadence Dance' is about. It's about how the world is cold and people step on each other to get to the top and don't care for their brothers. They're looking out for number one, and stuff like that. Pornography is just a perfect example of it. It's just a big money-making machine. I guess if you can keep it behind the counters in brown paper bags ... let 'em sell it. How do you feel?

How do I feel? I guess I would agree with some feminists and stuff – that it can exploit women. I grew up reading Playboy and Penthouse, too. The statistics show that a lot of sex crimes and pornography are related. I don't think reading a Playboy is going to make you commit a crime, but I think it feeds lust...
"To me pornography certainly isn't magazines. The song deals with what surrounds us, from selling toothpaste, to the billboard, to the magazine stand you walk by to go to work. That is pornographitti – everything that surrounds us. How can I, or how can this young kid go through life without being tainted by it and being scarred by pornograffiti that surrounds him? What he eventually turns into is a he-man woman-hater. He suppresses all the 'Suzies' and all the temptations. He ends up pushing away women and losing out on love, and hating, because of sexual temptation."

Is that the end of the story? Is there resolution?
"On the first side, he trips through life. 'Decadence Dance' is his introduction into the world.

'Little Jack Horny' is his every normal boy's promiscuity growing up. He knocks up his chick. 'President' is just his ambition. You can relate that to you wanting to be a whatever journalist, or me being a rocker.

This guy has his ambition – and that's even tainted. 'Why do you wanna be that? Is it to help people, or is it for power?'

"'Get The Funk Out' is, I think, everyone's first reaction when someone doesn't like you ... you pretty much go '(bleep) off!' That's my first thing. You're defending yourself. When you have more time to think, you wouldn't do that. 'More Than Words' is looking for love, rather than just hearing. He doesn't want to hear the words. He wants it. 'Money' is obviously some of the values that kids get installed with that are contradictory. In the beginning of the song, the mother puts the kid to bed and says, 'Don't forget to say your prayers,' and in the same breath she says, 'Don't forget to put the tooth under your pillow.' Those are light things, but those are contradicting values that parents instill. These things warp their sense of priority.

"'It's A Monster' obviously is when he grows up. He realizes that he's made his mistakes and now he has to live with it. He has to deal with all the problems he's created, the fruit that he's sown. It's in his face now. He's got a pregnant girlfriend ... his values are (bleep). That's where he turns around.

"The second half of the story starts with song for love.' End of story ... but it doesn't end. He doesn't die. It's to be continued.

"As far as 'Hole-Hearted,' the production's very minimal. It was done on 8-track. We could've done it bigger, but I want it to be separate from the album, kind of like an editorial. It's like Nuno (Bettencourt, the guitarist) is playing the 12-string on the porch. It has that kind of feel. It kind of talks about the whole record. How his life's ambition has occupied his time, that kind of stuff. He still hasn't found the peace in his heart to make him happy, but he's still looking for it. It could be a girl, it could be God. I don't want to tell you what it is, because I want people to put their own piece there. That's why we keep it general. To me, I'm looking for God. That's my own. You can put that if you want to. If you don't, I hope you got it."

Why'd you put a song like "Watching, Waiting" on the first album?

"'Watching, Waiting' and 'Flesh and Blood' ... there was a big contradiction between those two songs. I was asked about that all tour last year. All I can say is, "I'm human'. It was tough to put those two contradicting terms on the album. You hit it on the head. That was one of the reasons why I felt character named Francis. The names were changed to protect the innocent. Some of the stories are warped and were exaggerated, but it's basically some of the things I had to go through. 'Hole-Hearted' kind of sums it up for me right now. That's gonna lead off where the next record goes ... hopefully. Unless I get screwed up on the way (laughs)."

Who is Jesus Christ to you?

"I would never deny Him three times or once. He's the Son of God to me, period. I can go on, but I feel like I'm doing a sermon. I don't wanna do a sermon. What is He to you?"

He's the Son of God. He's God in the flesh, and He's fully human ... and he's my Lord.

"Is He? I could tell. I could see it in your faces (smiling and glancing at former Stryken drummer Joey Knight and I). Did you catch this in the new record?"

No, I haven't heard it.

"You've gotta hear the new record. It kind of answers a lot of questions for me. Hopefully, if you can relate to it ... it's just pornograffiti. It's dealing with the

"I would never deny Him three times or once. He's the Son of God to me, period. What is He to you?"

'Pornograffiti.' It's like 'Decadence Dance' part two. It's the same song, but now he sees the world through different eyes. He ends up withdrawing. This kid ends up not wanting to be part of this world, so he withdraws to a different time. That's why we go into 'When I First Kissed You.' The music's different, because it's supposed to set you back. That's when a kiss was a kiss, what your mother or father used to say ... You know, you didn't screw on the first date. He withdraws back to that time and wishes he was there, but obviously it's a dream. He wakes up to his own reality and his own world, and his own love, and that's 'Suzie's All Day Sucker.' That's blatant temptation and everything in the book. How he deals with it this time is he becomes a female, woman hater, because he can't suppress his sexual temptation. That's almost the end of the story. 'Song for Love' comes next. This is the end of the story. The first verse starts off very sad:

"He lies awake with open eyes/his love just died/ he's cold inside."

He wakes up, and he's feeling sorry for himself. He looks at the concept of love, and that's the light at the end of the tunnel. He doesn't know if it exists, but he has to believe in it. I think we all have to believe in it. After I do my thing, after you do your thing, after all the masks are all off ... everybody wants to be loved. It's not the traditional 'I love you/ You love me.' It's more a song about love. It ends in a vocal crescendo. 'A song for you/a song for me/a we had to do a conceptual record – to justify some of the contradictions on the first record. There are contradictions on the second record ... that's what life is all about – the constant fight, and the morality of it all. 'Watching, Waiting' is probably one of the most powerful stories in history. Whether you believe that the Man was God or that He wasn't, the story of the crucifixion is so compelling that we wanted to tell it like a historian and kind of hide it. We do hide it ... there's a couple (lines) that hint to it. I'm sure there's people who just like the song, and they go, 'I'm staring at the Son...' and they took at the lyrics and go, 'That's not how you spell sun.' It's a way to drag people into the story. We got some 'Stryper flak' for it, but hey, that's part of life. I believe in the story. If it can bring some people into the story, they're gonna have to have that battle, like I did."

When was the battle for you? How did that happen?

"To tell you the truth, I was brought up a Catholic. I consider myself a Christian. My mother's a Catholic. She's a good Catholic. She's an inspiration to me. She's kinda bummed out that I'm not a Catholic, but she's a Christian, too. I was brought up as a Catholic and I never really doubted the story. I'm glad I always felt like I believed in Him. I never doubted it. The people who confronted opposite opinions, I never had a doubt in my mind, and I still don't. This record, *Pornograffiti*, deals with the morality of the last ten years of my life. Obviously, we hide it in a whole morality of it ... my whole lifestyle. 'When I'm President' is like hidden as far as this little kid's ambition to be president. Is it to help people, or is it to glorify God? To do right? Or is it self-indulgent, selfish ambition, to have power? It talks about how power corrupts ... how such a high office corrupts. Sometimes when you're in that position you have to go with the flow or get kicked out. I relate to what I'm doing, as far as a rock and roller. It's such a tough life. I do believe that, through Christ, you can do it. I certainly can't do it alone, but it's a tough life. The temptations are incredible. Often I've wanted to get out. It's impossible, but then it's impossible without Him. I feel that God's given me a gift, a little bit of a gift to sing. I feel I can sing and I am on my way to glorifying Him. I certainly don't, as far as the whole secular music thing and the whole Christian music thing ... you know, a lot of people go, 'Hey, why are you in this? You should be singing in Christian music!' I look at it as, again, Christ ate with the sinners, with the beggars and the tax-collectors. The people who are saved, they don't need saving. It's the people who are here. I think Extreme is a positive band. It deals with the issues. If I can go in that direction and keep on going, I'll be doing alright. As far as the music, Nuno handles the music and the funk end to it. I'm glad I'm a part of that, because this is the music that moves me."

A friend of mine up in Washington told me about you guys. He said you guys were Christians and you just didn't grow up

with Petra ... you grew up with Aerosmith. So, I bought the album and read the lyrics to "Watching, Waiting" and was kind of excited. Obviously some of the contradictions bothered me on the first record. For me, it's a personal conviction, as far as, like, swearing or whatever... To me, I can't see myself doing that.

"I'm finding that the more and more the Spirit tugs on me, the harder it is to deal in this world. It's just going in the opposite direction."

It's easy to be judgmental to somebody who swears, but I don't want to do that, because it's not clearly written out in scripture...
"As far as swearing?"

Like the "f-word", or whatever.
"No, I think it spells it out. 'What your mouth says is where your heart is,' and swearing, obviously ... any type of slang, the Lord's name in vain, anything ... if it's a violent thing coming out of your mouth, it's in your heart. That reveals what's in your heart. I think it spells it out. Though, it's great that you're not quick to judge, because as soon as you judge, you'll catch yourself with a bigger log."

[Gary went on to tell how Chuck Swindoll "saved" his life.]
"I was swearing, working at a car rental place, and, at five o'clock at night ... it's dark, it's winter, I'm swearing, miserable, and I wanted to get home. Nothing's on the am radio station, and Chuck was screaming at me! He just destroyed me. It was kind of like in '85 when God spoke through Chuck to me. I love Christian radio, as far as some of the speakers go – Chuck Smith, Charles Stanley – these guys are fabulous, but Chuck Swindoll is my favorite. I listened to him last night in Austin. I got the book and found all the stations. I'm glad you like Chuck.

"Pray for me and I'll pray for you. I want you to listen to this record, because there's a lot of blood spilt on this record (mine). I'm on my way. I just know I'm on my way. The end of the record obviously leans in that direction, and I think ... I know, I hope, that God will speak through the last couple of songs maybe to tag some people and let the Holy Spirit tug at their own souls. The Holy Spirit's been tugging at mine, and I've been fighting it. I've been starting to accept it, because you can't fight it. It's horrible. It really is."

How do the rest of the guys in the band feel? What are their views on the Lord?
I feel personally there's pressure on me. I'm not a spiritual leader, but as far as the band, they would turn to me. They're always with me, since 'Watching, Waiting.' It's the first time I introduced something that dealt with God or whatever.

The rest of the band knows there is a God. Everyone knows there is a God, but like every other human being, we kind of decide to do our own thing. But then again, most of us wake up alone and have to deal with God on our own. I have a conscience, and I'm naked in front of my Lord every minute of the day – even when I'm doing wrong, I know He's there. I do ignore Him and do turn away, but I always end up on my knees. The devil would want you to believe, 'How could you ever turn away? God will never forgive you for this.' I know He will. He does, and that's what keeps me going, because I sin every day. Minor/major, it doesn't matter – he sees 'em."

So, you were basically in Extreme when the Lord touched your life with Chuck Swindoll?
Yeah, somewhere in '85 I felt that pulling and I fought it, because there's always still that human instinct to fight it ... but now it's gaining more and more and I'm starting to give in. I'm feeling that He's using me now. It's the greatest feeling in the world."

What is your goal with your music? You know, are you a ministry per-se, and if not, why not?
"That's a good question. Well, obviously, our music from a Christian standpoint would be considered secular. From a Christian standpoint, that doesn't mean that it's not Christian music or that you're not a Christian if you don't sing Christian music. I look at it this way – and I'm not trying to skirt the issue: First it's a trade. People on Wall Street, they do their job and their job on the computer is not necessarily Christian. It's not necessarily evil, but they do their job. Then at lunch they don't necessarily start winning souls. They live a life. You wouldn't go up to a person on Wall Street and go, 'Why aren't you doing Christian work?' It's a job, and a lot of people do that job. As far as a musician, we play music.

"As far as what Christian music is, there's a glorification ... Some music is to glorify God and that's great. That's Christian music. There's some music that deals with society, the bad stuff that goes on – that answers problems. There's some great, constructive positive rap music out there that's positive. It's great and it's getting these kids off of drugs. To me, that's as Christian as anything: You've got these black role models telling kids, 'Gangs ain't the way, drugs ain't the way, get a job.' To me, this is all positive stuff. That's not blatant glorifying God, but yes it is – there's morality in it.

"As far as Extreme, I do think that we have a conscience on this record. There is a morality on this record that this character deals with as best he can at this time. At the end it's very positive, and there's an uplifting thing. There is some nasty things on this record, and that's the truth. As long as you're telling the truth, then you're on your way. There's people that can relate to that truth. This is a human being who at times is very ugly. I don't make any excuses for 'Flesh and Blood.' To me, that's as lustful as lustful can get ... but I'm telling the truth. It would be wrong for me to just tell one side and just be happy and all this, because that's not life. There are Christians who fall by the wayside and try to get back on their feet.

"There's a lot of blood, sweat, and tears and a lot of my nakedness on this record. I'm up for shots in the face because of it. I defend it, as far as it speaks for itself. The next record will be considered secular on the Christian thing, but I think it will be very Christian. I don't think people will be quick to judge the next record. The people who are quick to judge the record because of the title '*Pornograffiti*' – those are the blind people. There's a lot of record stores who won't put the record in their store because if it's name. To me, it's crazy. If you read the song, it's as anti-porno as a porno song can get and that's what it's about. I wanna stay in the gutter, as far as the kids. To me, they're not in the gutter. These are the kids we're trying to reach. There'll be some fans that do drugs at our shows, but they're not gonna get the message, because they're not straight. I don't want druggies at my shows. I want people who listen. That's my main objective. I think it's gonna be very positive, and I'm on my way. Lord willing, I'm on my way to this.

"I'm finding that the more and more the Spirit tugs on me, the harder it is to deal in this world. It's just going in the opposite direction. The more and more I get rooted, the more and more I'm not part of this, ya know."

After the interview, Gary, Joey, and I chatted about end-times prophecy and then prayed together. It was a really cool time of fellowship. Gary is a real nice brother. Please pray for him and if you get a chance to talk to him, encourage him in the Lord. That's what we all need. Gary's on his way ... to the same place we're going, and that's maturity and intimacy with our Lord. Until we get there, we need lots of prayer and encouragement. As far as the band Extreme is concerned, form your own opinion. They're not a Bloodgood or a Vengeance, but maybe that's okay. Ask God about it.

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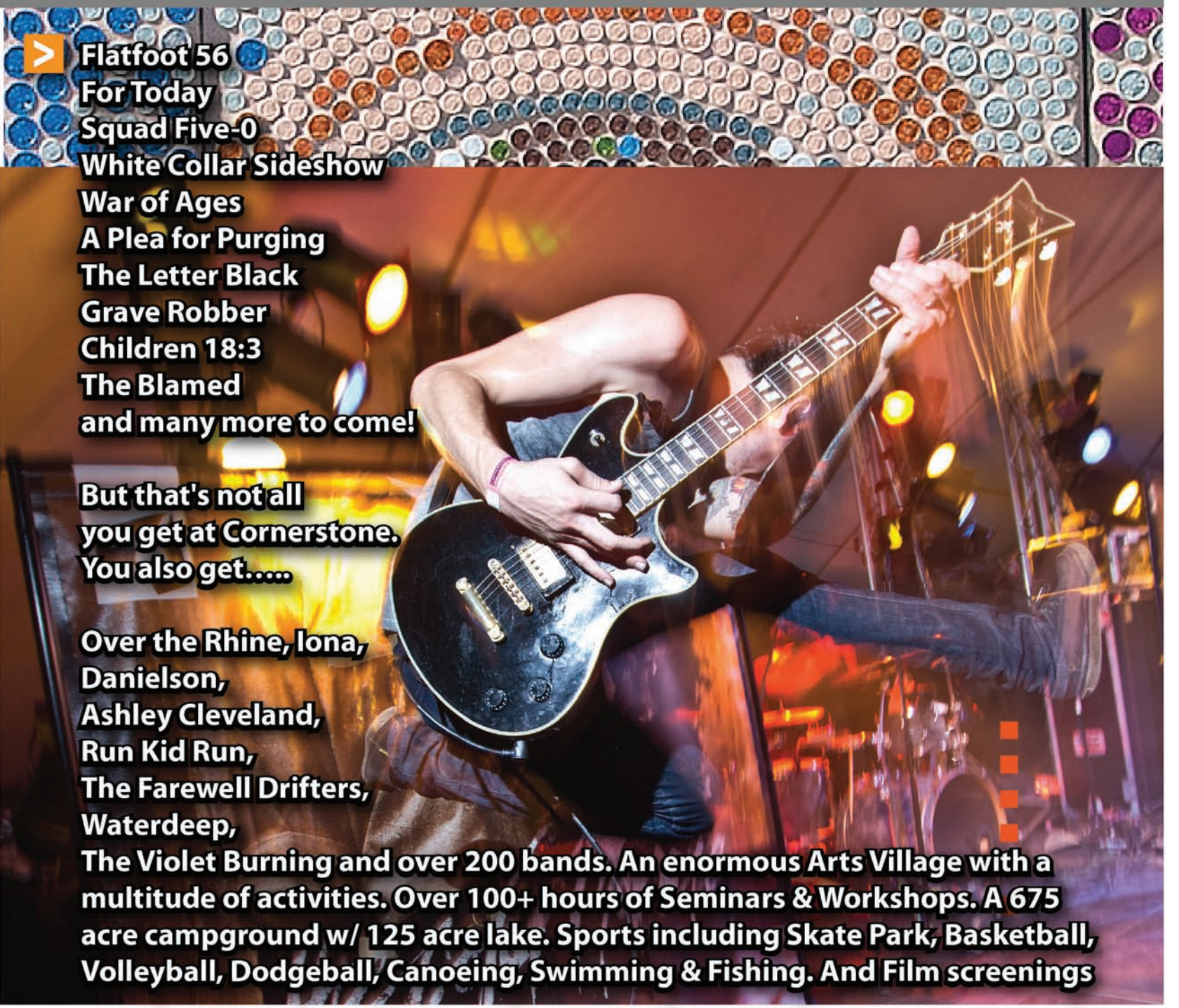

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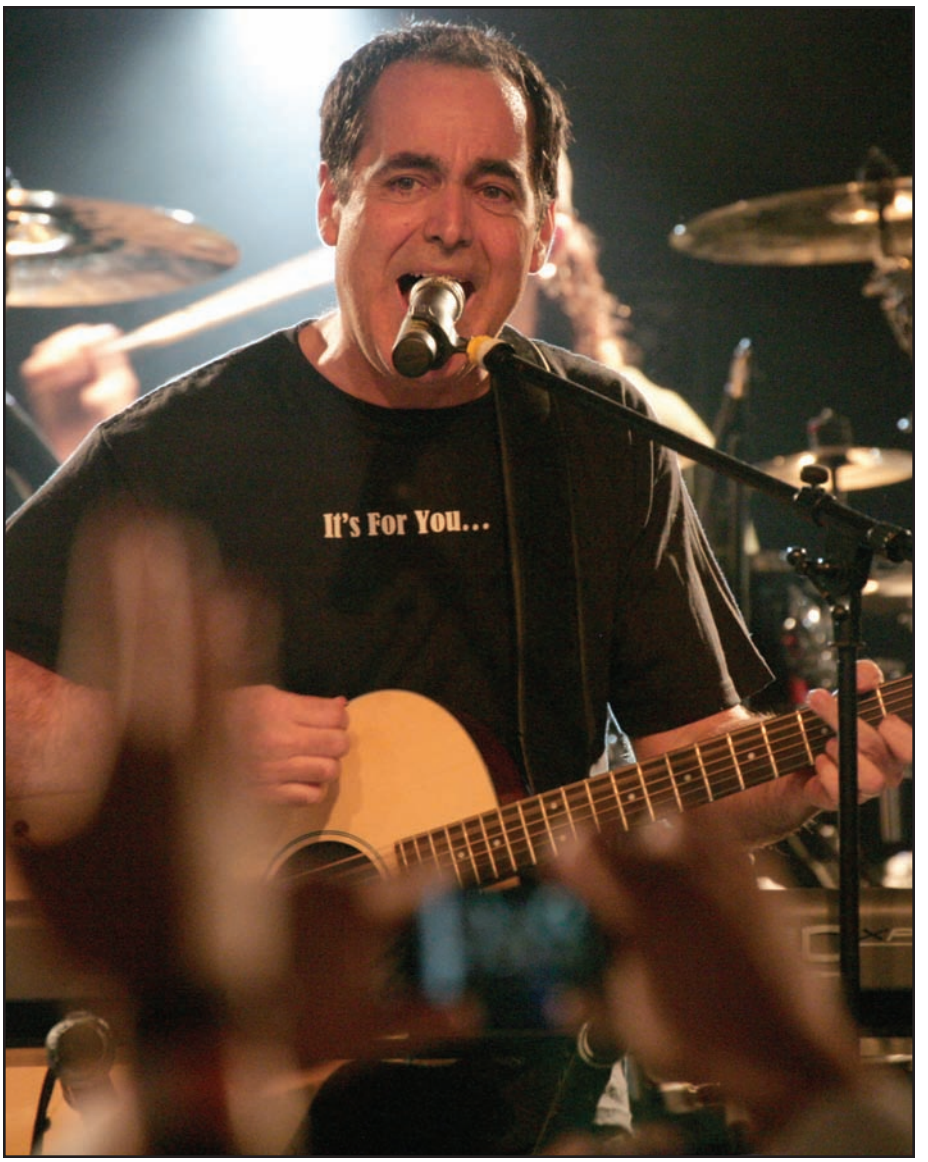

NEAL MORSE

TESTIMONY TWO – LIVE IN LOS ANGELES

Fans of Neal Morse and progressive rock will be dazzled and edified with this electrifying and inspiring performance. Professionally filmed/recorded (standard def/2.0 stereo) at The Whittier Theater in L.A. – the last stop on the tour – this epic three-hour concert (captured on three CDs/two DVDs) covers most of the music Neal has never previously recorded live.

"Lifeline" and the mighty "Leviathan" open things with power, followed by "The Separated Man" segment from *One* and an excerpt from the immensely popular *Sola Scriptura*. The highlight of the first half, though, is "Seeds of Gold" – never before performed – which hearkens back to the days of Kansas, Genesis and the like. DVD1 closes out with Part 5 of *Testimony One*. But it only gets better as DVD2 features *Testimony Two* in its entirety, easily the best material I have ever heard from Neal.

In fact, I would argue that this is the best lineup of musicians that Neal has ever performed with during his solo career. Neal, Randy George and Mike Portnoy are a trio made in heaven – Portnoy's flamboyant performance just as mind-boggling as any of his work with Dream Theater. But Rick Altizer (keys, guitars, vocals), Nathan Girard (keys), Mark Leniger (sax, percussion), Eric Brenton (guitar, violin, flute) and his son Nathan (cello, guitar, vocals) turn in absolutely stunning performances as well. These eight men gel so well together, its like watching a family jam session. The tour documentary (filmed by Randy George) on DVD2 is a cool look inside this "family" as they travel from venue to venue, and in addition to the usual camaraderie type stuff, it features

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Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

snippets from each locale on the tour. It is surprising that most of the venues are really small – to witness musicians of this caliber in that kind of intimate environment must have been a real treat. My only complaint – how in the world can the crowd be sitting during a show like this? And so quiet? Get up and shout … essential. (The three audio CDs contain the entire show, but in slightly different order – the "Reunion" encore at the end of CD2 instead of at the end of the show on DVD2.) [METAL BLADE/RADIANT] JONATHAN SWANK

NINE LASHES

WORLD WE VIEW

If there's a new hard rock band built to succeed, it's definitely Nine Lashes. The band's *World We View* is made for modern rock success while tour spots with Red and Thousand Foot Krutch make certain the tunes will be heard. "Anthem for the Lonely" is the obvious lead single and track from the album and it follows convention quite well. It's not original, but it's immediately memorable. Jeremy Dunn sounds great throughout as the band's vocalist, especially on "The Intervention." "Afterglow" is a worshipful tune that incorporates orchestral pieces into the overall framework. Everyone involved with Nine Lashes from the label (Tooth & Nail) to the producers (Aaron Sprinkle, Trevor McNevan) shows that the right people are involved on all sides. Thus, Nine Lashes is the safest bet to make the biggest splash in 2012. [TOOTH & NAIL] MATT CONNER

KUTLESS

BELIEVER

It's been four years since Kutless released some original rock tunes for the masses to consume, but fans will undoubtedly believe the wait was worth it once they hear the 13 tracks on *Believer*. While the solid worship album *It Is Well* came in 2009, the band's legion of fans have been holding out since *To Know That You're Alive* (2008) for a new Kutless LP. *Believer* finds the band focusing on what they do best – delivering a heartening message set to memorable rock melodies. "Carry On" encourages listeners to keep their faith through the darkest hours, while "All Yours" brings a worshipful acoustic refrain. If anything, the album has quite a lighter side. "Hero" is a song destined for placement on movies and television with its message of hope and earnest delivery. The same feeling carries over to "Identity," a piano-driven tune that could also join "Hero" with its placement hopes. "Come Home" speaks a prodigal-type message of the love and forgiveness that awaits those who turn back to God. The album closes with "Carry Me To The Cross" and it's an inspirational ending that centers the band on what matters the most. While the music on *Believer* will churn out numerous hits, it's clear the band has its head and heart on one primary thing: a message of hope and grace for those who will listen. [BEC] MATT CONNER

NOT ONE IS UPRIGHT

GOD IS NOT A WATCHMAKER AND THE WORLD IS NOT TICKING

Not One Is Upright is Red Cord's latest band. With their mix of heavy breakdowns and spazzy riffs, they have created a sound for themselves. They have brought a refreshing sound in the mix of cliché music. The vocals are strong, the message is heavy and the band is tight altogether. These songs are great to hear live and the band represents Christ hard on stage. These days it's becoming harder and harder to find bands that truly stand for what they believe in, and Not One Is Upright isn't afraid to show their love for the Lord. Keep an eye on them this year! They're sure to draw a crowd in 2012. [RED CORD] NICK COTRUFO (THIS MOMENT IN HARDCORE)

WORTH DYING FOR

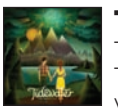
LIVE RIOT

From the first track, a spoken-word-instrumental intro, Live Riot will be an album that'll resonate deeply with you or it won't at all. There are a few cool elements here – vocoder works well to build suspense on "Arise" and the keyboards add nice little flourishes ("Love Riot") without being overpowering. There's even some screaming, though it's so faint in the live setting on "Freedom Is Rising" it's distracting trying to tell if it's there at all. "World Can't Take It Away" is a nice rocky worship song. The finale, "Savior," puts the best parts – heavy, minor tonality; yearning vocals; an electro pulse – together to make a standout cut. From there, though, it's familiar live church or conference worship music: "us-versus-them" language, Mariah Carey-esque vocal theatrics, long refrains where the band drops out and it's just the singer and the crowd, long cymbal-and-bass flourishes ending the song to get the audience to applaud. It's likely if you just bought a recording of your local church's worship band, or made one yourself, it'd carry a lot more meaning to you than this album would. [AMMUNITION] COREY ERB

THE KINGS KIDS

SET SAIL AND SEEK...

The Kings Kids are from Salinas, CA and playing midtempo Bay Area punk without pulling any punches. *Set Sail and Seek* is their second full-length. My favorite track is "Unfinished Road," which stands out a bit musically and shows a bit of Chuck Berry influence. The title of the song is a good analogy of the album, which is rough around the edges but shows The Kings Kids moving in a positive direction. *Set Sail and Seek* is very straightforward lyrically and a must-have for folks that like their Christian punk rock not watered down. If you're a fan of Rancid, The Clash or The Swinging Utters, I recommend checking this out. [THUMPER PUNK] NATE ALLEN



TIDEWATER

THE BEAUTIFUL LIFE

The young, talented Brett Allen is the voice, strings, keys, percussion and mind of Tidewater, his one-man band. For the just-released, three-song EP, *The Beautiful Life*, Allen worked again with renowned producer Kevin Gales and drummer Kenny Aronoff (Alice Cooper, John Mellencamp, The Smashing Pumpkins) to create this ambitious effort. Starting off with a familiar mandolin, the edifying "Not Just Any Love" is the strength of the album. The other two tracks, "The Beautiful Life" and "Desire" sound anemic compared to the authenticity and unique musical voice of predecessor *The Seas We Sail*. This sampler might just disappoint those who were expecting a return to, or possibly, the musical evolution of Allen's rawer sound, both vocally and instrumentally. Tidewater's magnum opus could be its forthcoming full-length album, due out sometime this spring/early summer, but the weaker two of the three aforementioned songs would need scratched. Shoemaker, stick to thy last, Mr. Allen. [ROXR/INPOP] CHARLIE STEFFENS

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Neal Morse *Testimony Two - Live in Los Angeles*	04	05
Nine Lashes *World We View*	03	03
Kutless *Believer*	03	02
Not One is Upright *God is not a Watchmaker and the World...*	03*	04
Worth Dying For *Live Riot*	03	02
The Kings Kids *Set Sail and Seek...*	03	02
Tidewater *The Beautiful Life*	03*	02
Sent By Ravens *Mean What You Say*	03*	03
Luke Leighfield *New Season*	02*	02
The Jelly Jam *Shall We Descend*	03	
Transatlantic *More Never Is Enough*	03*	05
Vocal Few *She'll Be Alright*	03*	05
The Skies Revolt *Some Kind of Cosmonaut*	03	03*
Sons *Keep Quiet*	04*	05
Eisley *Deep Space* EP	04	

SENT BY RAVENS

MEAN WHAT YOU SAY

The latest from Tooth & Nail treads familiar territory, but that's likely why the storied label was drawn to Sent By Ravens in the first place. The South Carolina quintet crafts a popular radio rock sound that echo current T&N acts like Emery, and it's clear the label knows well how to utilize such bands. Thus, Sent By Ravens is in good hands. "Learn From The Night" should become a radio hit with its strong heart and solid midtempo rock groove that snakes in all the right places. "We're All Liars" cranks up the amps and the rock cred with the best hardcore elements on the album. "Best In Me" closes the album with its strongest melodic moment. From the intense to the reflective, Zach Riner serves as a fine vocalist and the rest of the band follows suit. It's a chicken-and-egg scenario at this point, wondering whether T&N is known for such acts because they have an eye for them or whether they help churn them out. Either way, rock fans will rejoice once again. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] MATT CONNER~~

LUKE LEIGHFIELD

NEW SEASON

There's more promise than product on Luke Leighfield's *New Season*, and therein lies the problem for any meaningful listen to the British songwriter's latest LP. The 24-year-old technically crafts piano pop structures, but nothing sticks from the 10 songs listed. It lacks the buoyancy of The Rocket Summer, the catchiness of The Fray, the emotions of Death Cab or the epic reach of Sleeping at Last. In short, it's boring. That's not to say there's not potential here, but you have to mine for it. The final minute of "Slow Down" features a very nice build that makes you forget how long you had to wait to get there. "Garde Ta Foy" echoes early Paper Route with its plaintive, pretty mood. Still the need to work for anything is a death knell for an unknown artist in today's oversaturated marketplace. ~~[GOT GOT NEED] MATT CONNER~~

THE JELLY JAM

SHALL WE DESCEND

Ty Tabor's (King's X) main side project (the other being Platypus) is another power trio with Rod Moergenstein (Dixie Dregs) and John Myung (Dream Theater) adding drums and bass, respectively. This is their third album and probably most consistently heavy. Lead-off track "Who's Comin' Now" will remind the King's X fan why you love Tabor's voice and "Sameway Down" rings with the kind melancholy that'll remind you of why you like his lyric-writing. ~~[MOLKEN] DOUG VAN PELT~~

TRANSATLANTIC

MORE NEVER IS ENOUGH

Transatlantic never cease to amaze, and they definitely never cease to please their prog-rock-loving fans. Their last studio release was *The Whirlwind*, an opus of epic proportions. For the proggiest of fans and collectors like me there was *The Whirlwind* box set, then there was the two-DVD live release *Whirld Tour 2010*. There you have it, done with that chapter, now the band moves on and we all wait for the next album and tour. But wait, there is more! Most lovers of prog will tell you that more is always merrier! The longer the songs, the bigger the set list and the happier they will be. Enter the new five-disc set, *More Never is Enough*. Despite the awkward title, this is easily one of the best releases from Transatlantic to date. There are two DVDs packed with more than three hours of the most amazing live music you will ever hear. The video was recorded in Tilburg and includes the entire show. These guys are at virtuosos at the top of their game. Mike Portnoy on drums is the central energy of the group and he is as good here as he ever was with Dream Theater or any of his other side projects. Where else can you see him leave the drums to sing "Smoke On The Water" over a bass-pedal solo? Neal Morse sings and plays beautifully and his stirring and spiritual lyrics perfectly compliment the intricate music. These DVDs are great, but not vastly different and only slightly better than the *Whirld Tour 2010* release. The three audio discs are actually the true gems here because they contain the best live progressive rock recording you are likely to ever hear. Recorded in Manchester, England, the band is at the top of their game, and those that have seen them will know that means something special. It is a shame that the cameras were not rolling at this show because the audio on these three discs will set you free. Key tracks include "The Whirlwind" which is played from start to finish in its entirety, and the track "Duel With the Devil" is full of surprises. The best parts, though, are the jams, and there are many. Roine Stolt plays his guitar so well you will swear he has the ability to stop time itself. Over hype? Nah, just listen, because more really is never enough. ~~[RADIANT/METAL BLADE] DR. TONY SHORE~~

VOCAL FEW

SHE'LL BE ALRIGHT

Matt MacDonald of The Classic Crime takes his strong lyrics down a notch with his side project, Vocal Few. Backing with him is singer/pianist Kristie MacDonald. The lovely couple has put together a short, but solid album with their harmonizing vocals and sweet, soothing music. This album is absolutely flawless and a must-have for fans of good old folk music. The music is upbeat, uplifting and great to just sing along to. Once you listen to it once you're going to want to put it on repeat and keep on listening! We can only hope for more to come from Vocal Few! They're a very fun addition to the folk genre. ~~[NONE] NICK COTRUFO~~

THE SKIES REVOLT

SOME KIND OF COSMONAUT

The Skies Revolt is a band that has had its share of ups and downs. On this independently released album they relish persistence in the midst of the rollercoaster ride. The album opens with a chiming, modern-rock sound along with vocalist David Prindle's melodic verses urging the listener to "hold strong" rather than succumb to defeat. Synths abound on "It's All in the Reflexes" with guitars and breakdowns adding some muscle to the mix. When Prindle sings "This has to be crazy" it's hard to tell whether it's an observation or his artistic philosophy. The tunes sound designed for TSR's celebrated live shows and they're plain fun to hear. Rife edgy guitars, electronica and raise-your-fist choruses make it hard to sit still, yet they belie important themes. "Endure and Renew" reminds us that we're to be more than "survivors of impact and shrapnel" in the spiritual war, while cyber-isolation and consumerism are addressed in "They Cry Out to Do Nothing." We all need to be reminded to persevere and "build something new." The message is simply easier to digest when delivered by a wacky, rockin' band of cardboard robots. ~~[ROBOTIC] DAVID PLUNKETT~~

SONS

KEEP QUIET

Looking for something less in-your-face and something that's just more good music? Sons (fka Sons of God) is what you need. This band has a sound that is refreshing to the ears. It's experimental, artistic and all-round good rock 'n' roll. Each track is full of catchy tunes and passionate lyrics that is sure to grab your attention. The band seems to be a blend of Thrice meets Manchester Orchestra. Each song is a journey of musical emotion. Their passion is clearly heard in this album. Amazing. ~~[SLOSPEAK] MATTHEW LEONARD (TMIH)~~

EISLEY

DEEP SPACE EP

Eisley is a proven entity and you can rest assured that you're going to be assaulted by just about the sweetest swirling voices and harmonies you've ever heard over soft and catchy melodies deftly played by the band. While *The Valley*, the band's last full-length shared openly about pain and existing in the low lands of life, this one seems to find the band much more chipper. Tunes like "Laugh it Off" and the title track seem to relay a lighter, more fantastic focus than the previous shadows in *The Valley*. ~~[EQUAL VISION] DOUG VAN PELT~~

LOVE SONG

THE BOOK OF LOVE

Though the vast bulk of their appreciation in the U.S. came from the Christian market, Love Song's relatively scant output stands as a high-water mark in that once-derided of '70s pop genres: soft rock. Now that such music has become a touchstone for some currently hot indie/collegiate bands, the five CDs and single DVD comprising *The Book of Love* is a timely – and timeless – document worth investigating by some bands who would seek to top CMJ's airplay charts. Its five CDs and single DVD overflow with sumptuous vocal harmonies, peacefully mellow vibes and musicality that drew from country, folk and some of the more serene strains of post-Summer of Love/pre-'77 (read: punk) rock. Fans of the Carpenters and America who missed Love Song's original tenure during the Nixon years will find the nearly complete works of a possible new favorite band in one convenient place. For those interested in the way they figure into the history of cCm – from back when it was still fashionable to call it Jesus music – *Book* could be a revelation for new listeners. Though comprised of musicians with plenty of road and chart experience before they became Christian, there's a fetching innocence in the 23 songs on their two studio albums. Christianity hadn't yet become a lifestyle marketing vehicle, and the excitement these guys felt about their fledgling faith remains palpable over 40 years on. Rounding out the package is the double live album recorded on a tour not long after their official break-up, a disc of 21 demos that reveal even greater breadth to their sound, a booklet that collects – among other things – the text of an entire short paperback about the band and a meticulously restored concert video from '73, replete with drum solo and altar call. If you've wanted to delve into the hippie music of the '60s-'70s Jesus movement revival without gambling on possibly unproven collectible LPs with questionable production values (and Larry Norman's voice isn't your cup of dark roast), *The Book of Love* is a wondrous point of embarkation into sincerely joyful – say it with me – soft rocking. ~~[CALVARY CHAPEL MUSIC] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

OSKORD

WEAPON OF HOPE

As comparison to Holy Blood is inevitable, let's get that out of the way. While *Shining Sun* is a great listen, its strength – namely its diversity from song to song – is also its weakness. Folk instrumentals, oi-punk-cum-celtic anthems, nautical themes, blackened folk metal riffs are all present, which make for a fun record, but it means some sacrifice of cohesiveness. *Weapon of Hope*, on the other hand has the opposite problem. A cohesive vision of folk metal (and nothing else – even the black metal roots have been pulled up) has been achieved, yet the lack of diversity in the riffs (especially the transition between tracks 3 and 4), makes it difficult to distinguish between songs. Even still, this is one of the strongest Christian offerings in the folk-metal genre so far. Fans of Eluveitie and Skyclad will eat this up. ~~[SOUNDMASS] LOYD HARP~~

ROSIE THOMAS

WITH LOVE

Rosie Thomas possesses a much deeper understanding about life than she ever has before. Since her last studio album (*These Friends Of Mine*) was released nearly five years ago, the now-New York-based singer-songwriter found love and used that passionate emotion to help her overcome a devastating thyroid disorder and severe anxiety. Now, healthier and happier, she sweetly sings about those tales *With Love* as her fifth LP details. Like previous efforts, the indie luminary delightfully charms with smooth melodicism, a pinch of diversity and a heartfelt tone all while staying true to the 10-track collection's storytelling concept. While songs like "Over The Moon," "Really Long Year" and the single "Where Was I" will warm up heads like hot cocoa (or, in the latter song's case, help sympathize), two compositions in particular could be considered the marshmallows. That pair consists of the introspective "Like Wildflowers" and "Two Worlds Collide," an emotional yet absolutely stunning piano-laced ditty that pierces immediately with the opening line "I cried on my birthday." Once the tears subside, the heart heals again. *With Love*. ~~[SING-A-LONG/NETTWERK] BEAR FRAZER~~

WOVEN HAND

BLACK OF THE INK (BOOK/CD)

David Eugene Edwards has been steadfast for about two decades now in promulgating a vision of Southwestern gothic apocalyptic Christian dourness in the alt-country rock of his bands 16 Horsepower and, currently, Woven Hand. The smartly designed *Black of the Ink* positions Edwards' lyrics for WH as poetry by putting them in book form with titles possessed of a fancy font. Though not popular as some of his fans may want his music to be, Edwards trades in pop music, albeit of scarier, more melancholy and definitely more Christocentric character than anything Ryan Seacrest counts down from one to forty every weekend. As minimalist pithy ruminations on the agape and eros (and flashes of the forms of love that exist between those two) that haunt Edwards as much as they comfort him, these collected lyrics of the complete 'Hand discography work for speaking and reading much as they do being sung from their writer's fevered tenor. The accompanying EP of six previously unreleased songs sounds more like Edwards solo works than a full-band affair, but it's all in keeping with the aesthetic he's established to largely successful effect, though it could have stood for the contributions of his bandmates. If for no other reason to get it, pulling *Black* out at your favorite java joint will give you an immediately hip air not far removed from turning your friends on to Edwards' music. ~~[SOUNDS FAMILYRE] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

FOR KING & COUNTRY

CRAVE

Joel and Luke Smallbone are the collective voice of For King & Country. The Australian-born, Nashville, TN siblings' full-length debut, *Crave*, is a masterful blend of symphonic, vocally driven tunes with a mainstream appeal. While the music itself is accessible and catchy as flypaper, ears will be drawn to the spiritually cogent lyrics and vocal fire of the Smallbone duo, whose harmonies are devastatingly beautiful. "The Proof of Your Love," a poignant devotional song to Jesus, is a reminder to live out faith and that mere lip-service isn't enough. "Missing" is a lamenting love letter backed with a moving orchestral backdrop and exudes broken-heartedness. The breezy, Coldplay-esque "Fine Fine Life" has hit-single all over it, yet it's the other ten tracks on *Crave* that have a quality that is uniquely theirs. "Crave," the last track, is like a closing prayer. With sincere songwriting, infectious melody and choruses and fantastic production – there isn't a dud on this record. ~~[FERVENT] CHARLIE STEFFENS~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Love Song *The Book of Love*	04	05
Oskord *Weapon of Hope*	03*	03*
Rosie Thomas *With Love*		03*
Woven Hand *Black of the Ink*	04	04
For King & Country *Crave*	03	04
Apologetix *Classics / Rise Up and Rock*	03	03*
Retro-reprints *Album reviews from HM's past*		
The Swirling Eddies *Crave*	04	04
Seabird *'Til We See the Shore*	04	04
Mychildren Mybride *Unbreakable*	03	03
For Today *Ekklesia*	03*	02*
P.O.D. *Satellite*		

APOLOGETIX

APOLOGETIX CLASSICS/WISE UP AND ROCK

Just because ApologetiX have the field of Christianized lampoons of general market radio hits pretty much to themselves doesn't mean they don't know when it may pay to change up their game. The unboxed 11-CD *ApologetiX Classics* set (or series, because you can buy them individually) takes a high percentage of the band's professionally recorded output from the past 17 years and divvies it up into categories by decade and other distinctives such as "oldies," "heavy," "lite," generally uptempo "party" and, providing the smallest playlist of the lot, "country." Were the guys shifting enough units for Time-Life to consider licensing tracks from them, this is the kind of package for which there would be a half-hour infomercial and come packaged in a laminated cardboard case. It's a way to market to potential ApX fans who might be put off by the chronological and stylistic smorgasbord that usually comprises one of their albums. *Wise Up and Rock*, with its cover spoof of an infamous Loverboy image, is programmed like a second *'80s Classics* volume, but concluding the 17-track shebang this time is a medley of several tunes, with an emphasis on new wave from the decade's first half. Love or hate 'em, it's hard not to be impressed by their biblical literacy (and way to sanctify some of the most salacious songs) as it can be frustrating to hear them not work at the economy of a larger scale that allows "Weird Al" Yankovic to sometimes better capture the sounds of the acts he parodies than ApologetiX' lesser budget can allow. *Rock* will satisfy the ApX faithful, while parts or all of *Classics* provides cherry-picked content.

~~[PARODUDES] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

THE SWIRLING EDDIES

THE MIDGET, THE SPECK & THE MOLECULE

The genius of Terry Taylor has taken many forms over the past 31 years, from Daniel Amos and the Lost Dogs to The Swirling Eddies. I would love to tell you more about how quirky, cool and fun the new Eddies record is, how it includes "My Cardboard Box," one of Terry's best songs in years, but the editor of HM has asked for a 75-word review. If you like Terry, you'll love this record!

~~[STUNT] DR. TONY SHORE~~

SEABIRD

'TIL WE SEE THE SHORE

One of the easiest questions a music fan might answer in 2008 will be to prove why Seabird's debut is one of the year's best. Simply put, there's proof to be found in every song. From beginning to end, *'Til We See The Shore* is a fantastic piano-rock album. Need specific examples? Try the swirling piano bridge of "Jargon." Or how about the melodic, infectious Fray-like "Sometimes." Better yet, try the absolutely startling title track that fittingly closes the album that forces the listener to hit "play" all over again. Led by keyboardist/vocalist Aaron Morgan, who seemingly studied under Sleeping at Last's Ryan O'Neal, the music is equal parts modern piano rock movement (Jon McLaughlin, The Fray) and Brit-pop (Keane, Starsailor). The combination is enough to give Credential Records a flagship band that will certainly lead the way forward. ~~[CREDENTIAL] MATT CONNER~~

MYCHILDREN MYBRIDE

UNBREAKABLE

Calling these guys metalcore is not simply a copout term for the sake of genre classification. It legitimately fits. The album's opening axes had me expecting an updated nod to the "golden era" of metal, but then the rest of the band joined the dueling guitars to kick off something much different. While the boys churn out several more finger-licking riffs, there is plenty of hardcore fervor throughout this major label debut. Tough guy vocals are sometimes punctuated with gang chanting, and MCMB often prove their mastery of the low-end, chugging breakdown before dialing things back up to breakneck speed. It seems it is getting harder for a band to distinguish itself on a first outing, given the well-explored nature of the genre, but MyChildren MyBride do a decent job of it. With a little variety to distinguish between songs, they will be one to watch. ~~[SOLID STATE] TIM HALLILA~~

FOR TODAY

EKKLESIA

For Today is releasing a new full-length album in early April. In the interest of full disclosure, due to press constraints, it was not possible to obtain a full copy of their debut release, *Ekklesia*. At their label's behest, I was only able to review a snippet of songs from the record, and NOT the whole thing. That being said, I was not incredibly fascinated with the songs I heard. For Today is a metal band out of Iowa, and their claim as one of the most technically proficient metal bands around right now is probably true; there are spots on the songs that definitely prove themselves to be incredible musicians. But in the spots where there isn't extremely technical music, the songs lack originality, especially in their breakdowns. They're very capable of the "video game" style of sweep-picking, but they don't do it enough and it's what they're best at. If they would focus their efforts more on the technical work and lay off the fairly weak breakdown chants, the record would stand out more in an over-saturated market of mediocre metal bands who use breakdowns as a way to disguise their playing ability.

~~[FACEDOWN] DAVID STAGG~~

P.O.D.

SATELLITE

Skeptics about the phenomenon surrounding P.O.D., few they may be who read *HM*, might accuse the band's commercial fortunes to come from a lucky stop of the rap-metal bandwagon that allowed the San Diego warriors to be positioned as the positive (godliness optional) counter-punch to the hedonism and misogyny of Limp Bizkit and P.O.D. label-mate Kid Rock. But, *The Fundamental Elements Of Southtown* was no fluke. Their Rescue Records catalog proves as much, but *Satellite* will test P.O.D.'s mettle as a unit capable of making the masses' heads bang for a second time. Do they have it in 'em? Does Sonny have killer dreadlocks? Yes and yes already. *Satellite* has signs of a band with growing ambitions and a bigger budget (the white auras around the guys in the insert photos are a bit much), but P.O.D. are relevant and rockin' as ever. Arguably more tuneful, too. By the time you read this, first single "Alive" should be an existentially and salvifically affirmative anthem inescapable for hard rock radio devotees. The humane love sentiments of "Ghetto" should strike less jingoistic listeners with its applicability to the recent East Coast terrorist bombings, and the album's titular number soars stratospherically. One of P.O.D.'s strengths has always been its use of reggae for its roots to biblical spirituality. More successful of their two forays into that territory here is "Ridiculous," with guest toasting by the legendary Eek-A-Mouse. A team-up with H.R. of groundbreaking hardcore punk / reggae fusionists The Bad Brains, "Without Jah, Nothin'," sounds more like a well-intentioned jam session, but the use of dub textures bodes well for more experimentation. Big-ups also go to the Payable Ones for incorporating the best use of a children's chorus since Pink Floyd's "Another Brick..., Pt. 2" and Blindside's Christian Lindskog on "Youth Of The Nation" and "Anything Right," respectively. P.O.D. have pushed their genre's envelope respectably far and can't help but merit the respect of hard music fans regardless of spiritual allegiance. This *Satellite* orbits far and wide. ~~[ATLANTIC] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

LIFEstyle gadgets

KIDZ GEAR HEADPHONES

Kidz Gear has rolled out a new Apple version designed specifically for the iPod, iPhone and iPad – the Kidz Gear Apple Wired Headphones for Kids. This Apple-specific version of the popular Kidz Gear headphones feature unique "KidzControl™" Volume Limiting Technology for a safe listening experience while helping to protect children's hearing; an Inline Microphone; and a Remote with controls for Track Up, Track Down, and more. . [gearforkids.com] *DV* [Price: $29.99]

THIRD MAN IPHONE CASE

To create the Third Man 45 iPhone 4S Case, Griffin incorporated a real 7" vinyl record, pressed by United Record Pressing in Nashville, then die cut to protect the back of your iPhone. A molded frame snaps around your iPhone, holding the interchangeable record insert in place and protecting the controls, edges and screen. [griffintechnology.com] *DV* [Price: $29]

THE RESISTANCE CHAIR

Something for the older folks, this device allows you to actually exercise while sitting down. Not exactly sitting on the couch, but on your butt nevertheless. The World's Most Convenient Home Gym: The Resistance Chair® exercise system allows you to do a full body workout from a safe,comfortable seated position. Because you remain seated, you maintain balance and stability as you exercise your arms, chest, shoulders, abdomen, back, and legs. The patented Resistance Anchor Cable™ system offers a wide range of upper body and lower body exercises and provides smooth, low-impact resistance without use of heavy weights. The Resistance Chair system is made of very strong, commercial-grade construction with thick-wall steel tubing. It's built to withstand frequent use in gyms and rehab centers and has been tested to easily hold up to 400 pounds. [vqactioncare.com] *DV* [Price: $279]

STOMPBOX

This could just as well be on our Gear page, for this iPad gadget StompBox brings a new level of realism to iPad-based music effects apps like iShred LIVE by replicating the performance-ready durability of pro-quality effects pedals. Add an industry-standard 1/4" mono plug to accommodate an expression pedal and our GuitarConnect cable for the complete studio or performance experience.. [griffintechnology.com] *DV* [Price: $99]

HERPHONES

Subjekt HerPhones – le Petite Earphones, set a new standard in fashion and fidelity. HerPhones are uniquely designed to securely fit small ears with added comfort. The lightweight aluminum casing, sleek cables soft silicon ear-tips are thoughtfully crafted for a perfect female fit. [subjekt.com] *DV* [Price: $24]

MIC STAND MOUNT

Mount your iPad to any standard mic stand to display lyric sheets and sheet music, record your playing or just about anything else. Mic Stand's pivoting mount lets you adjust it to the perfect wight and visibility. It's the most secure way to mount your iPad in the studio (at least until your entourage grows to include "Dude who holds my iPad like a music stand"). [griffintechnology.com] *DV* [Price: $39]

LIFEstyle gear

CHARVEL DESOLATION SERIES STAR
The DST-1 ST Star marks the return of Charvel's classic Star body profile, with features including a neck-through body, maple neck, compound radius (12"-16") rosewood fingerboard with 24 jumbo frets and Charvel "shark tooth" inlays, EMG® 85 (neck) and 81 (bridge) humbucking pickups with black bezels and three-way toggle switching, single domed metal volume control knob, stop-tailpiece bridge, locking tuners and black nickel hardware. Available in Black and Snow White gloss finishes with matching headstock; flame maple-top models also available with multi-ply binding (body, neck and headstock) in Trans Red, Trans Black and Trans Blue Smear gloss finishes with matching headstock. The tremolo-equipped DST-1 FR Star shares all the same formidable features and finish options, with the sole exceptions of having a Floyd Rose® locking tremolo and sealed die-cast tuners. [charvelguitars.com]

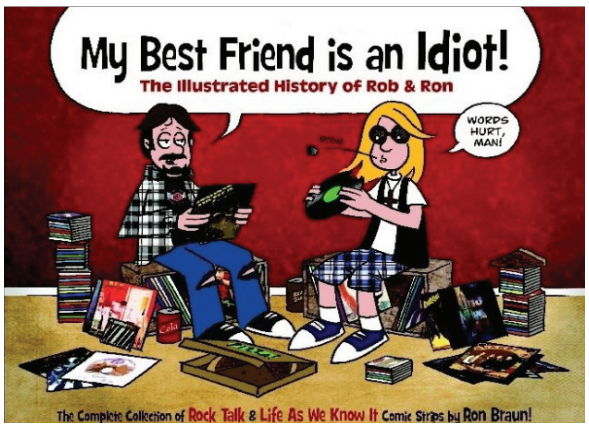
AUDIX TM1 PLUS
The ultra functional Super Champ X2 combo amplifier combines 15 watts of rich dual-6V6 tube amplification with a Fender Special Design 10" speaker for dynamic combo amp tone. This simple, easy-to-use platform includes two switchable channels and several modern extras, such as a voicing knob for selection of 16 different amp types (Tweed, Blackface, British, Metal and more), 15 effects with level control, dual-channel switching (footswitch optional), tap tempo control for precise delay time or modulation speed adjustment, ¼" line output and USB output for speaker-emulated digital recording. For extra versatility, players can add-on the Fender FUSE™ software (available as a free download), for customization of amp voicing and effects defaults, effects parameters deep editing, and online access to free Fender community content. [fender.com]

PAWN SHOP SPECIAL GRETA AMP
Housed in the playfully diminutive form of a vintage tabletop radio, the Pawn Shop Special Greta model is quite possibly the most unusual Fender tube amp ever (in fact, you'll be hard pressed to find the name "Fender" anywhere on it). It's a charming two-watt tabletop beauty with a 4" Special Design speaker, old-school VU meter with "clean to overload" indicator display, simple volume and tone controls, and a 1/8" back-panel auxiliary input perfect for iPod or other media player use. Its vintage-style enclosure has front and rear wood panels finished in bright red, gold-finished metal top and sides for increased shielding, "Greta" script badge on the front panel and tabletop feet. Under the hood and on the back panel, Greta features a single 12AT7 output tube and 12AX7 preamp tube, with a ¼" instrument jack and ¼" line out jack (for preamp use with another amplifier). [fender.com]

GRETSCH RANCHER
The biggest new Rancher is the G5022CE Rancher Jumbo Cutaway Electric, which produces great volume and broadly expansive tone complemented by its elegant Venetian cutaway for easy access to the fingerboard's upper reaches and onboard electronics. Premium features include a solid spruce top with scalloped X bracing and the traditional Gretsch Rancher triangular sound hole, flame maple back and sides, mahogany neck, 21-fret rosewood fingerboard with Neo-Classic™ thumbnail inlays, 1940s-style pickguard with Gretsch logo, compensated bridge with rosewood base, gold-plated hardware, deluxe die-cast tuners and a gloss Savannah Sunset finish. Onboard Fishman® electronics include a Sonicore under-saddle pickup and Isys+ preamp system with onboard tuner, battery life indicator and controls for volume, treble, bass and phase. This photo has been doctored in PhotoShop, but wouldn't it look dandy with a giant HM logo on it?
[gretschguitars.com]

LIFEstyle

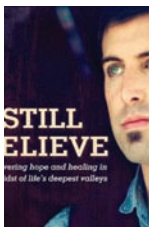
books & graphic novels


My Best Friend is an Idiot!
The Illustrated History of Rob & Ron
WORDS HURT, MAN!
The Complete Collection of Rock Talk & Life As We Know It Comic Strips by Ron Braun!

MY BEST FRIEND IS AN IDIOT! | RON BRAUN
It's a real treat to see these old comic strips (*Rock Talk & Life As We Know It*) get compiled in a book with running commentary from the author. Those that have been reading *HM Magazine* for a long time (including its days as *Heaven's Metal Magazine*) will remember these funny strips that centered around artists at the time (Guardian, Stryper, Bride, Whitecross, Rez). Think *Wayne's World* meets *WKRP* or *FM*. Like a good sit-com, it's both heartwarming and funny. The awesome part, though, is that the context behind almost each strip is the Christian hard music scene. [toon-it-up.com] *DV*

HERE COMES TROUBLE: STORIES FROM MY LIFE | MICHAEL MOORE

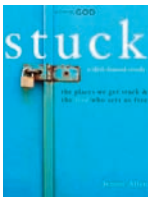
This audiobook of Michael Moore reading aloud is probably the most insightful and personable work that he's done yet. He recounts a collection of over 20 stories that gives the listener an insight into various events that influenced and formed him into eventually becoming a film maker out of his desire for a better America. The stories bring to mind an almost Forrest Gump humor with him stumbling into historic moments, and reveal both funny and potent circumstances that occurred from his childhood onwards. If you're undecided about purchasing the entire book, check out the free chapter that Moore has posted on his website. This specific story interestingly deals with his journey of faith and his friendship with his priest, and the account that brought Moore into a grasp of living one's life in redemption. [Hatchett Audio] *Tabitha Grove*



I STILL BELIEVE | JEREMY CAMP
This book details the powerful journey of life that Jeremy Camp has experienced. Camp comes forward about the struggles he has faced in life and how God has helped him through it.Through the use of scripture and past experiences, Camp explains to the readers that we will all face trouble in our lives, but God will pull us through. If you listen to Jeremy Camp's music, this book is a must-read as he provides the back story for some of his most famous songs. After reading this book, you will find a new love and appreciation for his music.
[Jeremy Camp, LLC] *Nicole Murphy*

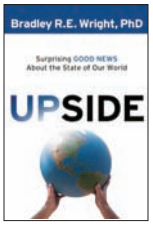
DIE YOUNG | HAYLEY & MICHAEL DIMARCO

If this book were to become the handbook for a generation, what an awesome generation it would be. This couple start off with an obituary of sorts from each, where they describe the joy in burying themselves in Christ, dying to self and living for Him. In an awesome authors-in-your-living-room move, the publisher has made available short companion videos to aid with group study and individual reflection. Killer stuff (pun intended). [Crossway.org/dieyoung] *DV*



STUCK | JENNIE ALLEN
Jennie is the wife of one of the pastors at an awesome, thriving church in Austin (called Stone). With this Women's Bible study DVD and its real stories and solid biblical teaching, she proves that it's not only the men at Austin Stone that are knocking it out of the park for Jesus. While I can't speak for women as to the relevancy of these object lessons and stories, but the truth she applies resonates with this fellow believer. In her simultaneously released book Anything, she explains through real-life anecdotes how her "anything You want" prayers of surrender are changing her life [Thomas Nelson] *DV*

UPSIDE | BRADLEY R.E. WRIGHT, PHD



This book expounds on a point brilliantly made in the Fast Living, which is that things are getting better on earth, not worse. This flies in the face of many doom and gloom attitudes we often carry. Did you know that global poverty has been cut in half over the last several decades? That infant deaths have decreased dramatically in recent years? That Christianity is a growing and influential force in Asia and Africa? Maybe the world isn't in a downward spiral after all. In an age of pessimism, this book offers good news to Christian readers looking for glimpses of hope. [Bethany House] *DV*

LIFEstyle film

AGE OF HEROES
An intense World War II movie for a boys' night in. Major Jones (Sean Bean) leads a commando unit that later becomes the insipiration for the SAS elite fighter team. Action, excitement and an easy bunch of guys to root for (and hope against hope that they can outwit and outfight the Nazi 5th Alpine Division. [Entertainment One] *DV*

CHURCH GIRL
The life of a preacher's kid is a story that's been a long time coming. This one looks, sounds and feels like an onstage theater production (i.e. musical) with its settings (lots of stages), which stifles some of the movie's energy and believability. The story is prodigal in nature and doesn't mince subject matter, though it shows restraint in language and flesh. As a live event, it was probably quite powerful and energetic, but on DVD the transitions take just a moment too long. There is a funny girl fight with a wig, though ... and there's a wonderful lesson/example of a praying mom turning her desperate intercession into praise (in song, even). [Entertainment One] *DV*
[Cuss: 0.2 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0.2 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

I somehow found a way to not ever have seen this movie (still haven't seen Gone With The Wind, either). With this cool Universal 100th Anniversary Blu-Ray edition, it can be seen at the uber-resolution of Blu-Ray, on a standard DVD player and with the digital copy on a computer or handheld device. It's easy to see why Gregory Peck's adaptation of the Atticus Finch character became so likable. His calm demeanor and his attention to the needs around him are certainly attractive. It's interesting to look back in hindsight and see milestones that had an impact in changing our culture. This movie (plus the Pulizter Prize-winning book by author Harper Lee) is certainly one of those culture-changing icons. [Sony Pictures] *DV*
[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 70]

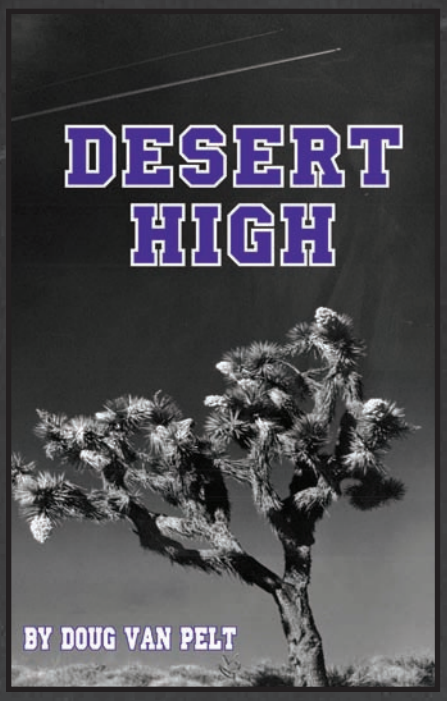
OWL CITY | LIVE FROM LOS ANGELES

As Owl City has gotten bigger and bigger, I've been cautiously suspect and wary. Would success and adding to the sound ruin the magic? This DVD recording of a Los Angeles concert on the *All Things Bright and Beautiful Tour* proves that this kid still possesses the magic. It helps to have an audience enthralled with your tunes, ready to feed the performer that electric energy, but the changes Adam Young has made to the Owl City sound turn out to be good. By adding a full band (a drummer, and extra set that Young sits down and plays to start the show, an extra tom, a keyboard here, a piano there, another keyboard player, a violinist and cellist) the songs are allowed to breathe a bit more and the organic elements support the melodies with a natural sweetness that the electronic ones and zeros brought artificially, if you will. All this is in evidence by the second song in the set, "Hello Seattle." Some might be shocked at the fairly guitar-driven performance of "Fireflies," but it works. It's touching to hear the Ronald Reagan speech from "January 28, 1986" as well as the spiritually innocent "Meteor Shower." [Eagle Vision] *DV*

THE FADES | SEASON ONE
Watching this show might comfort those who feel like everyone else thinks you're crazy. 17-year-old Paul (Iain De Caestecker) sees spirits of the dead – The Fades – although no one else can. Like many BBC creations (*The Office, Life on Mars, Dr. Who*), this series offers a creative story from a left-of-center and somewhat coy/sarcastic perspective. [BBC] *DV*

ANCIENT ALIENS
The first episode of this season jumps right into the plot of the Cowboys & Aliens imagining the interaction between extraterrestrials and the men and women of the Old West. There's a historical marker in Aurora, Texas that is pointed out here as the documentary-style show investigates evidence of such other-worldly visitors. Other episodes examine monster creatures, landmarks and architecture and other mysteries that the A&E Television Network have been exploring for a long time, albeit mostly from an areligious bias. Nevertheless, because the producers make an effort to be unbiased, it can be fascinating viewing. [History] *DV*

KEY to Ratings = number of scenes w/cussing, gratuitous sex, violence & how easy it would be to start a "spiritual conversation" after viewing it with someone.



HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL,
flight testing & TIME TRAVEL?
read it all in the book *Desert High*
HM Editor Doug Van Pelt's first novel

deserthighbook.com

HM PRESS

PICK OF THE LITTER

Lhoist
Lhoist is Mark Garza (Embodyment, The Famine) and his friends. The name lhoist (pronounced "lowest") comes from 1 Corinthians 15:9, when Paul calls himself the lowest of the Apostles. Garza lists the band's influences as The Promise Ring, Ben Folds, Colin Hay, Radiohead.
(scouted by Rob Shameless)
soundcloud.com/lhoist

☆ Cities of Refuge
Screaming and tough metalcore from Mesa, AZ that formed only about a year and a half ago. The band loves ABR, For Today, blessthefall and they fit right in with those influences.
(scouted by Anthony Bryant)
facebook.com/citiesofrefuge

Farewell Forever
Gang vocal metalcore with varied vocal approaches and lovely guitar/drum riffage textures. Powerful.
(scouted by Anthony Bryant)
adambakermusic.co.uk

One31
Female-fronted rock band from Orlando, FL. Imagine the anger of Hayley Williams and the building hard rock of Red.
(scouted by Anthony Bryant)
one31music.com

☆ Hadwynn
Hadwynn are from Raleigh and play rustic indie rock tinged emo kind of in vein of As Cities Burn, Emery and even old Pedro The Lion. Very passionate about their faith and very honest lyrics including the last song "The Seed Song," which vocalist wrote while he was being tested for rare form of arthritis that killed his grandfather. The song written inbetween getting tested and the results is a letter to his wife saying that if he dies it will be okay because Jesus will raise the dead and he can be like a seed under the earth until then.
(scouted by Jerry Graham)
facebook.com/hadwynn

Menchen
Bill Menchen seems to be one of the busiest dudes in the Christian metal underground. His latest album reigns in some tight and heavy Dio-style hard rock. Vocalist Ken Redding does a good job. Robert Sweet is the band's drummer.
facebook.com/bill.menchen

Of Arizona
Nice vocals for this melodic rock four-piece, who are from, of all places, Lebanon/Darlington, IN
facebook.com/ofarizona

Isaac Genius
Fun pop punk with lots of energy from Joplin, MO.
myspace.com/isaacgenius

Millennial Reign
Old school metal. Imagine Loverboy covering Deep Purple at a Triumph tribute festival.
millennialreign.com

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

Concerning "Jeus is My Girlfriend" Songs: Observations on the Imbalances of Today's Worship (Part the First)

Back in 2003, during season 7 of the animated comedy series *South Park*, an episode aired entitled "Christian Rock Hard" in which Cartman wants his band "Moop" to play Christian Rock, and leaves the band after the other members ridicule the idea, and bets Kyle $10 that his new band could get a platinum-selling album by playing Christian Rock before "Moop" can. Cartman's strategy? He starts a band (called "Faith +1") and rewrites pop love songs, replacing "baby" with "Jesus," and other lyrics with spiritual words.

For instance, in one of Faith +1's songs, Cartman sings, "I want to get down on my knees and start pleasing Jesus; I want to feel his salvation all over my face!" In another he sings, "I promise I'll be good to you, keep you warm at night, Jesus. Jesus, why don't we just cut off the lights?" In yet another, he sings, "You died for my sins and you know that I would die for you, right? What's the matter, baby? You're trembling, Jesus baby...I wanna believe it's all right, but I get lonely in the night, and it's up to you to save me, Jesus baby." (Earlier in the episode, Stan told Cartman, "You don't even know anything about Christianity," and Cartman replies, "I know enough to exploit it.")

Now, what makes this conceit so humorous (for those who do find it humorous, and it might come as a surprise to most people how many Christians find it very funny...) is that it seems to be a strategy that is used by many of those who write contemporary worship songs, though, of course, that's highly unlikely (at least in such a blatantly straightforward manner as Cartman advocated it).

The making of contemporary styles of worship music is a necessary and legitimate enterprise (the reasons for this we will, God willing, examine in a future article...), but there is always a temptation (or danger) that, in the interaction with an artistic genre, even if the specific content involved in that genre is re-oriented to a more Biblical direction, the ethos or character (say, the emotional disposition) of a genre can continue to affect expressions of that genre (even if they have been re-oriented in intent and use).

This should not surprise the fan of contemporary sub-genres of rock, since sub-genres like post-punk, screamo, industrial, death metal, etc., are, to some extent, partially defined by their emotional disposition (you don't, for instance, generally hear death metal singers croon gently and softly over their music, as the aggression and anger expressed are germane to the ethos of the sub-genre).

My point in all this is that most of the kinds of modern pop music upon which most modern worship songs are based stylistically (neo-folk, R&B ballads, modern rock, and, in some particularly hip cases, post-rock), the lyrics focus on romantic relationships and the emotions which accompany these relationships. This aspect of the ethos of those sub-genres of music (with the notable exception of most post-rock and some modern rock) fits in with some of the legitimate Biblical expressions of worship and devotion to the Lord Jesus.

However, those Biblical expressions which do correspond to the lyrical/musical ethos of the contemporary pop music upon which a large portion of modern worship songs are based are not intended to dominate Christian worship expressions (any more than other Biblical worship expressions are intended to). These Biblical emphases are intended to be kept in a balance in our worship (and we will, God willing, explore what these expressions and their intended balance are to be, as well as the Biblical reasons behind such a balance, in future articles).

Nevertheless, the fact is that, both within and without today's Evangelical Church, people are aware that songs which present the emotional, romantic, and, yes, sexo-spiritual (thanks to Frank Hart for that apt and arresting term)/ sensual lyrical content of modern pop music have become dominant in a huge part of our congregational worship expressions. This fact is why the writers of *South Park* (even back in 2003) could satirize the music of the modern Church and depend upon the fact that their audience would understand the satire and find it amusing (and don't kid yourselves, the *South Park* writers are not even from Christian backgrounds: they're lapsed Mormons...).

Why has modern worship taken this particular turn? Is it all bad? A turn for the better? We'll (Lord willing) explore the answers to these questions in future articles of this series.

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The way I see it by Chris Wighiman

MARK ELEVEN

Forgive and forget. So the saying goes. CS Lewis said, "Everyone says that forgiveness is a lovely idea until he has something to forgive." We would all acknowledge that forgiveness is important, but once wronged we feel quite justified in clinging to our anger. Our willingness to hold grudges for weeks, months, and even years is quite astounding.

We were created to be relational people. We have become flawed people. These two facts result in many hurts, both intentional and unintentional. The ability to forgive is an essential part of living in relationship with one another. Henri Nouwen wrote, "Forgiveness is love practiced among people who love poorly. It sets us free without wanting anything in return." Living free from hurt is largely dependant on our ability to forgive people who sometimes do a poor job of showing us love.

How important were healthy relationships to Jesus? In Mark Chapter 11, when describing the power of prayer, he pauses and gives this command, "When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." In this case, Jesus places the responsibility of forgiving not on the person who did the offending, but on the person who had been wronged! We are instructed to offer forgiveness to those who have hurt us. This seems so backwards. Why would Jesus put such pressure on the innocent?

Romans 5 says, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Our example is Jesus. He offered the means to forgiveness while we were still God's enemies [Romans 5:10]. Jesus steps into the rebellion and sin in our lives and shows us love by offering forgiveness. We cannot help but learn from his example of love and emulate it in our own broken relationships.

Today think about where the unresolved hurts are in your life?
Who is it in your life that has "loved poorly"?
Go to them and offer them your forgiveness.

g_editorial by Mike Reynolds

What is the fear of God?

It is the product of knowing God. If there is no fear of God then there is no knowledge of God.

When it is easy to live day to day without a conscious reverence and awestruck wonder of who God is then we can most likely assume that our "Christianity" has been relegated to information about God and not according to personal knowledge. It is like a Wikipedia article on someone you have never interacted with, it is not true knowledge, it is merely information based upon someone else's experience.

King David said of the wicked, "There is no dread of God before them"(Psalm 36:1). It is a wicked thing to not dread God, because it is equally wicked to not know Him.

Daniel saw the Son of Man in a vision he said, "As for me, Daniel, my spirit was deeply distressed within me, and the visions in my mind terrified me"(Dan 7:15).

Ezekiel saw the LORD's glory and said, "When I saw it, I fell facedown", after this initial encounter Ezekiel says, "I sat there stunned for seven days"(Ezekiel 1:28,3:15). God is God, we should fear Him for this reason alone.

King Solomon said, "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom"(Prov 1:7)

Jesus said, "And I say to you, My friends, don't fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. But I will show you the One to fear: Fear Him who has authority to throw people into hell after death. Yes, I say to you, this is the One to fear!"(Luke 12:4-5)

A.W. Tozer said, "10,000 lesser problems are solved when a man or woman comes into right understanding of who God is".

My point is this, seek the reality of who God is, if we love God then we love all of Him, justice through mercy.

Don't relegate God to a God who doesn't have the power to encounter. Believe God in the majesty of His provision in Christ until you see Him face to face. Christ came so you could know the One who is from the beginning. Real knowledge of God will produce reverence, awe, fear, terror, and absolute abandonment to anything less. Pursue God for who he really is. He has not changed.

"In Christ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden." —Col 2:36

Mike Reynolds, guitarist, For Today.

PLEASE DON'T SEND ME TO CHURCH CAMP

Most of my life has been defined by bad theology, and most of that theology came from songs, some of which I willingly subjected myself to.

When I was younger, my brother would perform in talent shows and "special music" at our church. Across denominations there's a concept of "special music" in which time is allotted for a church parishioner, or occasionally a has-been Christian specialty-market performance artist, to grace a congregation with a vocal or instrumental performance (Christians also have a concept of "love offerings" in which performers, typically vocal artists– typically male quartets–make a living going from church to church playing for donations, i.e. "love offerings"). This is usually right around the offertory (when the offering is collected, perhaps to encourage spending for better mid-service entertainment). There also is an entire market of instrumental popular contemporary Christian music singles, karaoke versions, for parishioners to perform. My brother would perform classic cuts from dc Talk and Carmen, but the most striking to me all these years later was the song "Please Don't Send Me To Africa" by Scott Wesley Brown.

This started me down a long road of bad theology (sounds like a gateway drug), and all for the sake of being cute or clever.

The song was about a Christian man, so I'll assume he's fat and has a goatee, who is called into Christian service to the wilds of Africa. It starts off with him pleading God, as the title suggestions, to leave him be. "I'll serve you here in suburbia in my comfortable middle class life." Oh, it's satire...I get it. Except I didn't get it, and I was first exposed to the song when I as a young impressionate. It's is a humorous attempt at a man bargaining to stay in America versus a pre-Dr. Livingstone Africa that is apparently overrun with carnivorous wild animals, disease, and Godless, cannibalistic natives. At the end of the song, the booming voice of God (before He became black and played by Morgan Freeman), commands the wimpy white singer to go to the very place he fears the most. He agrees of course, because he is a good Christian. Now this song may seem harmless, just a Christian one-hit wonder that sprang up around the same time as Billy Ray Cyrus, but to me, I took it as a literal view of how God works. Callings are a big concept in the Christian world; I know because my dad left a fairly comfortable job as a gas-station manager and the suburbs of Grand Rapids, the only thriving city in Michigan, to work for half the pay in a small town cast with extras from Deliverance, all because he was called to be a minister. This was when I was seven. And I was scared. God was going to sweep me away to a life of full-time service, and judging by "Please Don't Send Me To Africa", it'd be to the one place that was last on your list. It'd be the place that you were predisposed against; after all, the man spent an entire four minutes telling God how much he hated even the thought of Africa, only to be sent regardless.

Scott Wesley Brown is not, however, included in my nostalgia Christian punk musings.

Philmore looked like they were trying to be a classic rock revival band, and there was some elements of this in their music, although they were a decidedly punk power-trio. The cover to their debut self-titled with just their name in "Labyrinth"-type letters with a photoshopped lens flare, and their picture on the inside had them posing with their instruments in aviators and ripped up jeans. The drummer had a fu manchu mustache that made him look 20 years older than he actually was. They covered Bon Jovi, and their first single "Our Finest Hour" featured a glam twin guitar attack over a manically plodding double-kick rhythm and the lead singer's falsetto wail.

But he sang love songs to Jesus over some pretty tight punk rock. Listening to the music now, it's hard to fathom; on the first track, he actual tells Jesus "I know that You love me and I'm so in love with You/As long as You're with me, and I'm with You, together there ain't nothing we can't do". There's a common parody of Christian music where sensual lyrics, meant for a physical lover, are sung to God or Jesus, and Philmore wasn't too far off. Except they were sincere. And that sincerity was affecting, especially if you were an 8th grader who maybe kinda felt that way about Jesus yourself, or at least, knew you were suppose to.

I was quite fond of Philmore around 8th grade. Philmore's entire career is contained in two releases, a full-length and an EP that was eventually bloated into a full-length (if you count the addition of two new songs and the remarketing). Their first album is classic rock-spangled punk with Jesus loves songs, their second release is indie-rock punk with songs about more conventional topics, sans spirituality. I loved their self-title back then ('98), and I am more privy to their EP, still a staple of my collection, all these years later (The Bare Truth About Philmore, my mom protested the album art–the three members, topless and shot from the waist up, covering their nipples; to avoid more Christian house-wife controversy, they released the full-length with the picture silhouetted).

Philmore's classic youth group rousing number, "Fishy", has the distinction of being the most annoying song I ever loved, and I do mean loved. This song struck me on so many levels, torpedoing the Christian/romantic/punk rocker in me, winning me to it's mentality that only served to reinforced what I wanted to hear. "Jesus has a girl for me/ She's everything I want her to be". The song was about predestination but not of the Calvinist/Armenian variety, more of the Tom Hanks/Meg Ryan. The concept of "the one", of romantic destiny, of having a single counter-part in the vast universe... your one-and-only, true love. Hollywood loves this concept, often typified by the cute girl in a comfortable relationship engaged to a douche bag (she can't see he's a douche bag although it's glaringly obvious) who meets her destined true love months (days) before the wedding. The one noteworthy alternative to this is the male best friend who sees the girl platonically but eventually, also days before the wedding, realizes his true feelings. This is the "grown-up" version of Disney's "some day your prince will come" classic animated fare, also featuring destined true love deliverance. Most people, however, realize that this concept is a fantasy that, although it does make for compelling-if-not-overplayed entertainment, does not actively reflect our existence (movies often skip the "like" stage. As a screenwriter, there's no other option. Nothing is more grand than love). Think about it; if an ending is described as "realistic", that means that it's depressing, because life is depressing. But Christians have the concept of destined true love, only Christian's believe that God is pulling the strings, beginning when he created the two individuals, albeit incompletely, for later oneness.

But if you're a socially awkward Christian who only has to conquer that fact that he's unappealing to the girls that he finds terrifying to even casually talk to, nothing is more reaffirming than the belief that someday you'll meet the girl that Jesus has for you. Not only is she perfect for you, but Jesus did all the work! "Every good and perfect gift I know is from above/ But there is one gift that I haven't got and that's the gift of love/Now I know Jesus loves me, and I am so in love with him/ But there's a different kind of love love love that I've been thinking of." Reading it outside the context of punk music makes it sound like a teenage girl devotional. The song goes on to say "I want a girl who loves Jesus just as much as me."

Philmore's debut also had a number on saving one's self for marriage, the aptly titled "Worth The Wait". This song turns the act (or non-act) of abstinence into a romantic gesture, painting a picture of the singer alongside his bride on their wedding day, about to head off to have kinky Christian sex for the first time but only in the missionary position (I'm inferring the sex part). This song confused me since the lead singer had no fiance or even a girlfriend. I was made aware of this because I met the band when they came to play next to my church on the concrete foundation of an old mill for 20 youth-groupies. Nevertheless, this song became another mantra for love-lorn conservative teens who couldn't have sex even if they wanted to, the waiting part not necessarily by choice. But hell, we'd turn it down if

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Guest editorial by Chad Johnson

TO HELL WITH FEAR!

***God has not given you a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound-mind (or self-control)* – 2 Timothy 1:7**

Being love for the world – witnesses of the Gospel, hands and feet of Jesus – fulfilling the call. If you are wired anything like I am, you can read or think about loving others toward Jesus, but almost instantly you sense overwhelming fear welling up. It's important for you to know that 95% of those times when I seek to pray over someone in public, fear finds me. When I share a "word" of encouragement with a stranger at lunch, fear tells me I might get the "word" wrong. When I tell the check-out person how much Jesus loves them, fear tells me I'm being offensive. In each of these, fear makes a strong case for laying low and just whispering a silent prayer, or better yet, ignoring the person altogether. Fear says they probably won't get healed. Fear says you don't have spiritual gifts or even love to offer. Fear says rejection is coming. Fear says stay quiet and mind your own business.

To hell with fear! If fear does not exist in heaven than it must have come from hell. It needs to return to the depths. This is a powerful response, in prayer, when you are learning to touch the world around you with God's love. You will sense fear. Fight it and love anyway. Condemn fear and pray on. Rebuke opposition and encourage regardless. Note: Being nervous is part of the learning process. It's like riding a bike for the first time without training wheels, which my 6-year-old just did!. Three weeks later and David is riding his bike like a tried champion. Anxiety is best friends with fear. Both must be cast aside. God will calm your nerves. The more you practice loving others, the more natural it becomes. Fear and anxiety must be rebuked. They are spirits sent to thwart heaven's plan.

God has already told you that He has not given you a spirit of fear. Anytime fear (or anxiety) cause you to make a decision, you can know that decision has not been made in faith and God does not have to honor it. It does take faith to pray for a stranger who is hurting. Your own heart must be encouraged before you can encourage others. Love must dwell in you so it can overflow out of you. God has been extremely clear; you have been armed with everything you need for the battle. Power. Love. Sound-mind. Don't be discouraged when you get rejected for trying, at least you tried!!! Don't worry about not getting your words or "words" right – just speak what's on your heart and trust God to soften hearts. Stop considering the likelihood of their healing, salvation, encouragement or anything else – these are all things that we can't do apart from God's Spirit anyway. To hell with fear!

Prayer: Jesus, I confess that I often allow timidity, fear and anxiety to drive me. I want and need to be driven by the Spirit of power, love and self-control. Holy Spirit, anoint me with these three things and help me to practice them daily. Bring people around me that are equally hungry to see the Kingdom of God established. Bring true repentance, confession, salvation and wonderful Spirit-led works to my town and every other town. Fear, the Lord rebuke you! Go back from whence you came – you are not from my Father's kingdom.
—Chad Johnson

New Zealand {Our Story} | A Come&Live! Documentary
Available now as a Vimeo Stream or Free Download.

Reunion Tour | Cont'd

we got the chance! Apparently, the song continued to be the mantra of my Christian-fortified Alma mater, where students would occasionally meet as freshmen and marry the same year to enjoy the wiles of college life as settled-down newly weds. Hell, it was a dry campus anyway. If that seems like rushing it, you're probably right; a symptom of abstinence is often dating, and then hurrying up and marrying, sex itself, which has been just out of reach all those wholesome years post-puberty. Being the naive dick that I was, once put this very song on an inspired love mix for my girlfriend at the time (whom I met at college). Her response: "But I didn't wait." Oh Philmore, couldn't we all have had you to deny our body's impulses?

I actually can't say that any of this is truly bad theology. I admit I know so little, and my minimal grasp seems to change with time. I do, however, see it retrospectively as either a blind-faith campaign or as a social band-aid. The often misused idea that Jesus is a substitute for a physical lover is ultimately asinine, but I suppose it's comforting to dateless white emo Christian teens who see Bible study as a means to attract a destined-by-God match. Converting sexual desire into fuel to grow in faith is a genius plan looking back, especially given how strong sexual desire can be in those formative years. And ultimately, even within the Christian playbook, sex is the reward (but the wholesome, marriage-bed variety). I agree that sex is worth waiting for, thus the original plan, but sometimes it just seemed a little too marketed and a little too focused on the sex, rather than the datee (or, if you kissed dating goodbye, the courtee).
But what of Philmore? The Bare Truth is an 8-song collection of excellent indie-infused punk rock n roll, fast in pace and big on the low-end, with singer Justin Grieman's high-pitched voice sounding more classic than modern (falsetto pop-punk now dominating with their neon). It's infectious, and it's aged well. That's more than I can say for their debut, although it's still a highly enjoyable, if not cringe-worthy, spin.

And as for Scott Wesley Brown? I remember you had to dedicate your life to Christ. You had to say a prayer where you told God you were his for placement on the chessboard. And I did, more than once, just to make sure it stuck (plus, whenever there was an altar call, the preacher turned from the unsaved to those that needed re-dedication, and those things were long, drawn out affairs to the point that, beyond conviction, you said what you needed to just in case and to move things along). I'm not going to say whether or not a kid who has Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles sheets can comprehend those life-altering decisions (I use to picture hell as a pile of burning sticks that you'd be thrown on top of). But I do believe that God gives us talents and dreams and interests, and those are not unholy things. I use to think, and Wesley Brown helped, that full-time missionary work was the end all to this life of service, and forsaking your natural desires (that dirty self-fulfillment) was all part of the plan, like some Taoist monk who seeks enlightenment through pain. God's too big to know how He works, and that scares me, but it's also the root of believing. He's big enough, I think, to work with my passions and not against them. At least I hope so.

Roots & Culture

Allan Aguirre

of Olive Trees & Wild Branches (Part 3)

We have established in Parts 1 & 2 that the Punk Rock and Alternative genres established by bands such as The Sex Pistols and Bauhaus have, through time, been replaced with mainstream hybrids and counterfeits like Avril Lavigne and Dave Matthews, and that the essence of these genres have been buried deep below the sands of conjecture and opinion.

I've stated that this same "disregard" for authenticity can be applied to our faith and how centuries' worth of theological and doctrinal hybrids and counterfeits characterize our faith today. A faith, once synonymous with a specific Root and Culture, has given way to roots and culture seeped in hybrid manifestations.

I'm convinced that an understanding and application of the **biblical** roots of our faith would breathe new sound scriptural Life into the Covenant relationship bought for us with the shed Blood of the Lamb.

Paul, in Acts 24:14, defined Christianity as being a sect of Judaism and defended his faith by confessing that he believed "all things which are written in the Torah ('law') of Moses and in the Prophets." A far cry from today where 1900 years of Greek and Roman linear thought processes of a Jewish cyclical concept have buried the biblical roots and essence of our faith deep below the sands of conjecture and opinion. A hybrid.

Scripturally, Paul's faith was embodied, modeled and taught by Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. Scripturally, salvation is by and given to the Jew first – then the gentile. Scripturally, it is intended to be practiced and rooted in 'all things which are written in the Torah of Moses and in the Prophets.'

Paul establishes this in Romans 11 in regards to gentiles being grafted into the cultivated Olive Tree of the House of Israel: *"But if some of the branches were broken off [Israel], and you – a wild olive [a gentile believer] – were grafted in among them [Jews] and have become* ***equal sharers*** *in the* ***rich root of the olive tree****, then* ***don't boast as if you were better than the branches*** *[Jews]****!*** *However, if you do boast,* ***remember*** *that* ***you are not supporting the root, the root is supporting you****."* Romans 11:17-18 (emphasis mine)

Paul continues, *"…you had no Messiah.* ***You were estranged from the national life of Israel****. You were* ***foreigners to the covenants embodying God's promise****. You were in this world without hope and without God.* ***But now****, you who were once far off* ***have been brought near*** *through the shedding of the Messiah's blood."* Ephesians 2:12-13 (emphasis mine).

Christianity today remains a foreigner to the Mosaic Torah covenant embodying Messiah; a foreigner that has rejected the scriptural foundational root of its faith. Not only does it believe that it's "better then the branches", it also believes that it supports the root – ripping this "root" entirely out of the equation, centuries ago – thus estranging us ever the more from the national **and spiritual** life of Israel. And all heaven just weeps…

Paul continues, *"For he himself is our shalom – he has made us both one and has broken down the middle wall of separation which divided us by destroying in his own body the enmity occasioned by the Torah, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances."* Ephesians 2:14-15a. Did Paul just say that Jesus destroyed Torah with its commands and ordinances? Doesn't that contradict what he said in Acts 24:14? Doesn't this kill my argument?

And herein lies our 1900-year-old dilemma.

What to do… what to do…

[fb/twitter: allanAguirre]

ask. seek. rock.

ASK A MENTOR, SEEK ADVICE, ROCK YOUR CAREER

BY RANDY SPENCER
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"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
(Hebrews 11:1)

If you are a musician or if you are in rock and roll as George Michael sings, "you gotta have faith." Everything doesn't happen overnight. Whether it's learning at school or moving up in a company at a job, things take time. We learn along the way and we grow and hopefully mature from our experiences. If you're a professional athlete, you have to believe in your self and exude confidence in order to win the game. Without that faith or belief, why even show or up or run the race?

As a musician, you have to believe in your self before you make a phone call to get a gig or begin looking for a producer to record your songs or seek out other band members. Even if it's a tiny step, God rewards our belief as we seek and trust in Him. (Matthew 17:20) As we grow our faith, God wants to bless us abundantly. He can and He will! (Ephesians 3:20) First off, don't think that overnight you will be playing large venues or sell lots of CD's. It's a gradual process. God wants us to grow and be faithful with the first steps of our careers and from there, allow other doors to be opened. (Matthew 25:14-23) God sees all and if we are making an effort to wholeheartedly serve Him in the small things, He will bless our paths and guide us to bigger things.

Many bands in the beginning of their careers experienced this. It was common for bands like Nirvana, P.O.D., and REM to play small clubs and sleep on peoples couches on their first few tours. The Police and U2 played before small audiences in the first part of their career and from there things evolved over the years. Even The Beatles played in small clubs in Germany before their records got released. They developed their style, their interaction with an audience on stage and worked towards becoming better musicians. Use this time wisely to become better musicians, develop as a performer – to get confidence on stage. Videotape each show and look back and self critique it and see how you can improve and get better. The musicians that have done this have been the ones to develop large audiences – Muse and dc Talk are some of the artists that have practiced this method.

Believe. Seek God. He has a plan for you! (Jeremiah 1:4-7)

As Steve Perry sang, "don't stop believin'!"

Illustration by Mike Lawrence